

WEAKNESS OF FAITH

ظاهرة ضعف الإيمان



New and
Revised
Edition

Muhammad Sâlih al-Munajjid

الدار العالمية للكتاب الإسلامي

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC PUBLISHING HOUSE



IN THE NAME OF

ALLAH

THE ALL-COMPASSIONATE, ALL-MERCIFUL



Weakness of Faith

- **Title: Weakness of Faith**
- **Author: Muhammad Sâlih al-Munajjid**
- **English Edition 1 (1999)**
- **New Revised English Edition 3 (2011)**
- **Layout Design: IIPH, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**
- **Filming and Cover Design: Samo Press Group**

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Copyright © 2011 International Islamic Publishing House
King Fahd National Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Al-Munajjid, Muhammad Salih

Weakness of faith / Muhammad Salih al-Munajjid - 3.

.- Riyadh, 2011

112 p ; 21 cm

ISBN Hardcover: 978-603-501-120-4

1- (Faith) Islam

I- Title

243 dc

1432/7773

Legal Deposit no. 1432/7773

ISBN Hardcover: 978-603-501-120-4

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ARABIC HONORIFIC SYMBOLS USED IN THIS BOOK

(ﷲ): *Subhânahu wa ta'âlâ* — 'The Exalted'

(ﷺ): *Şalla-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam* — 'Blessings and peace
be upon him'

(ﷺ): *'Alayhis-salâm* — 'Peace be upon him'

(ﷺ): *Raḍiya Allâhu 'anhu* — 'May Allah be pleased with him'

(ﷺ): *Raḍiya Allâhu 'anhâ* — 'May Allah be pleased with her'

PRONUNCIATION AND TRANSLITERATION CHART

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
أ	short 'a', as in <i>cat</i>	a
آ - ع	longer 'a', as in <i>cab</i> (not as in <i>cake</i>)	â
ب	/b/ as in <i>bell</i> , <i>rubber</i> and <i>tab</i>	b
ت	/t/ as in <i>tap</i> , <i>mustard</i> and <i>sit</i>	t
ـ	takes the sound of the preceding diacritical mark sometimes ending in h (when in pausal form): ah, ih, or ooh; or atu(n), ati(n) or ata(n) when uninterrupted	h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)
ث	/th/ as in <i>thing</i> , <i>maths</i> and <i>wealth</i>	th
ج	/j/ as in <i>jam</i> , <i>ajar</i> and <i>age</i>	j
ح	a 'harsher' sound than the English initial /h/, and may occur medially and in word-final position as well	h
خ	as in <i>Bach</i> (in German); may occur initially and medially as well	kh
د	/d/ as in <i>do</i> , <i>muddy</i> and <i>red</i>	d
ذ	as in <i>this</i> , <i>father</i> , and <i>smooth</i>	dh
ر	/r/ as in <i>raw</i> , <i>arid</i> and <i>war</i> ; may also be a rolled 'r', as pronounced in Spanish	r

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
ز	/z/ as in <i>zoo, easy</i> and <i>gaze</i>	z
س	/s/ as in <i>so, messy</i> and <i>grass</i>	s
ش	as in <i>ship, ashes</i> and <i>rush</i>	sh
ص	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /sw/ or /s/ farther back in the mouth	ṣ
ض	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /d/ farther back in the mouth	ḍ
ط	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /t/ farther back in the mouth	ṭ
ظ	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing 'the' farther back in the mouth	<u>dh</u>
ع	no close equivalent in English: a guttural sound in the back of the throat	‘
غ	no close equivalent in English, but may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like the French /r/ in 'rouge'	gh
ف	/f/ as in <i>fill, effort</i> and <i>muff</i>	f

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
ق	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /k/ farther back in the mouth	q
ك	/k/ as in <i>king</i> , <i>buckle</i> and <i>tack</i>	k
ل	/l/ as in <i>lap</i> , <i>halo</i> ; in the word <i>Allah</i> , it becomes velarized as in <i>ball</i>	l
م	/m/ as in <i>men</i> , <i>simple</i> and <i>ram</i>	m
ن	/n/ as in <i>net</i> , <i>ant</i> and <i>can</i>	n
هـ - ه - هـ	/h/ as in <i>hat</i> ; unlike /h/ in English, in Arabic /h/ is pronounced in medial and word-final positions as well	h
و	as in <i>wet</i> and <i>away</i>	w
و	long 'u', as in <i>boot</i> and <i>too</i>	oo
ي	as in <i>yard</i> and <i>mayo</i>	y
ي	long 'e', as in <i>eat</i> , <i>beef</i> and <i>see</i>	ee
ء	glottal stop: may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like 't' in the Cockney English pronunciation of <i>butter</i> : <i>bu'er</i> , or the stop sound in <i>uh-oh!</i>	' (Omitted in initial position)

Diphthongs:

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
أو ، و	long 'o', as in <i>owe</i> , <i>boat</i> and <i>go</i>	au, aw
أي ، يَ	long 'a', as in <i>aid</i> , <i>rain</i> and <i>say</i>	ay, ai, ei

Diacritical marks (*tashkeel*):

Name of mark	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
fathāh	very short 'a' or schwa (unstressed vowel)	a
kasrah	shorter version of ee or schwa (unstressed vowel)	i
دَammah	shorter version of oo	u
shaddah	a doubled consonant is stressed in the word, and the length of the sound is also doubled	double letter
sukoon	no vowel sound between consonants or at the end of a word	absence of vowel

ABOUT THE WORD 'LORD'

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is 'master' or 'ruler', and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: 'the lord of the mansion' or 'Lord So-and-So' (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God — Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital 'L' may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah — not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

The Editor

WHEN 'JIHAD' REFERS TO FIGHTING

Although jihad is often translated into English as 'holy war', it must be noted that war has never been described as 'holy' in any of Islam's primary texts or even early Islamic literature. Linguistically speaking, jihad is an Islamic term that applies to a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from daily striving to meet the day's challenges, to the striving against one's desires and self, to the struggle to provide for one's family. Its basic definition is 'the act of striving or struggling in the way of Allah'. Therefore, jihad is not limited to war; it includes struggling with one's soul, speech, body and wealth so that the message of Allah reaches all humans willing to receive it.

Islamic scholars have referred to different types of jihad, such as jihad against the self (to understand Islam, act upon it, call others to it and be patient with the difficulties of making this call), jihad against the Devil (repelling Satanic whispers, doubts and lusts), jihad against the tongue (controlling it, using it to enjoin what is good, forbid what is wrong, spread the correct teachings of Islam and answer false ideologies), jihad against aggression (with the purpose of protecting Islam and the lives, honour and property of Muslims) and other types of jihad like jihad against the hypocrites, jihad against oppressors and jihad against mischief makers.

Jihad — in the context of fighting — has specific rules and conditions that need to be met before jihad is initiated. The first

rule is that people are not to be fought because of what they believe, or to coerce them to accept Islam. The second rule is to 'fight only those who fight you' and never initiate unprovoked aggression (*Qur'an* 2: 190). That means that Muslims are only allowed to fight back, rather than initiating fighting; but 'fighting back' includes fighting against actual aggression as well as proactively addressing real threats of aggression. In both cases, Muslims are instructed to be prepared and ready to defend their nation before they actually engage in military conflict. There are additional conditions, but the above-mentioned conditions are vital for putting jihad in its broader meaning in the proper context.

Another condition of the sort of jihad which involves fighting is that it should take place only under an Islamic authority that 'raises the banner' for such jihad. It is not following the Sunnah at all for any individual or self-appointed group of Muslims to wage war on behalf of a nation. Instead, Muslims should be united under the single authority of an imam or khaleefah (caliph), except in the case where an individual needs to defend his own family and property, or to help his neighbour to do so. This is proved by the example of the early Muslims as well as texts in the *Qur'an* and the Sunnah:

«When there comes to them [the hypocrites] a matter related to [public] safety or fear, they spread it about; if only they had referred it to the Messenger and to such of them as are in authority, those among them who are able to think through the matter would have understood it.» (*Qur'an* 4: 83)

«Hudhayfah ibn Yaman asked the Prophet (ﷺ): What if (the Muslims) have no single leader (they are divided into disputing groups)? The Prophet (ﷺ) answered: If they have no single leader

or unified group, then leave all these disputing groups, even if you have to bite on a tree until your death.» (part of a longer hadith recorded by Bukhari)

There are other conditions for jihad. In general, the rules laid out for war in Islam should be upheld unless there is some legitimate need or strategy when fighting occurs that would necessitate going against those rules. A Muslim should not kill himself or herself (*Qur'an* 4: 29) nor kill another Muslim, except by accident (*Qur'an* 4: 92). Women, children, the elderly and other non-combatants should not be harmed. Land should not be destroyed, nor trees cut down. Corpses should not be mutilated. Islam should not be imposed upon non-believers. Rather, if combatant non-Muslims choose on their own to embrace Islam, even if only as a deceitful trick, it should be accepted by the Muslim leadership, and fighting should stop. Peace should be sought before lives are lost. Treaties and agreements should be upheld. Prisoners should be well-treated. Above all, justice must be done.

«Fight in the path [according to the rules set by Allah] of Allah only those who fight you, but do not commit aggression [transgress limits]. Allah does not love aggressors. ...And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is [freely embraced] for [the individual's faith in] Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no aggression except against transgressors.»

(*Qur'an* 2: 190, 193)

«Allah does not forbid you from being good, kind, just, and fair to those who have not fought you because of religion nor driven you from your homeland. Allah loves those who are just. Allah forbids you from giving allegiance to those who have fought you because

of religion and have driven you from your homeland, and those who supported your expulsion...﴾ (Qur'an 60: 8-9)

In addition, the Muslim nation is encouraged to maintain strong military capabilities to promote justice and to deter acts of war and aggression.

﴿And make ready for them [their potential aggression] all you can of power, including steeds of war, to deter the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others besides, whom you may not know but whom Allah knows.﴾ (Qur'an 8: 60)

The Editor

THE ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT ON SLAVERY

Slavery existed before the coming of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Islam did not abolish slavery, though it put limits on it and made it a virtuous act to free slaves.

In Islam, there is only one way a person may become enslaved and that is by being a non-Muslim among people who have been captured after raising arms and fighting against the Muslim nation. When such people have been conquered, the Muslim ruler has the option of enslaving them or releasing them (with or without ransom), and he makes this decision based upon the best interests and safety of the state. The Prophet (ﷺ) strongly rebuked any other means of enslaving a person. Thus, no person may become enslaved due to poverty, debt, kidnapping, committing a crime, voluntarily submitting to slavery, or any other means.

Islam encourages the freeing of slaves and has made the freeing of a slave a form of expiation for sins such as accidental manslaughter, the breaking of a vow, or voiding a fast by engaging in sexual intercourse. The freeing of slaves is also one of the categories upon which the zakâh funds should be spent (*Qur'an* 9: 60). The Qur'an calls the freeing of a slave an act of righteousness that may be performed at any time:

«Righteous are those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the scripture, and the prophets; and they give money, cheerfully, to the relatives, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, the beggars, and to free the slaves.» (*Qur'an* 2: 177)

In regards to the treatment of slaves, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: «They are your brothers whom Allah has put under your authority, so if Allah has put a person's brother under his authority, let him feed him from what he eats and clothe him from what he wears, and let him not overburden him with work, and if he does overburden him with work, then let him help him.» (Bukhari)

«Whoever accuses his slave when he is innocent of what he says will be flogged on the Day of Resurrection.» (Bukhari)

«Whoever slaps his slave or beats him, his expiation is to manumit him.» (Muslim)

«If a man had a slave woman whom he fed — and fed her well, and taught her — and taught her well, then he set her free and married her — he will have a double reward.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

The male owner of a female slave has the right to have sexual intercourse with her as long as he, or the slave's previous owner, has not married her to another person. This is a right exclusive to the slave's owner. No one, including the owner's sons, may touch the woman unless the owner marries her to him. If the slave woman bears her owner a child, then her owner may never sell her and she automatically becomes a free woman upon his death, if he has not released her before that.

As can be seen from this evidence, slavery in Islam is far different from the institution of slavery as known in many non-Muslim countries.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

All praise and thanks belong to Allah alone, the One, the Almighty and All-Merciful. Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, the last of His Messengers and Prophets, and upon his family, his Companions and all those who follow in his footsteps until the end of time.

The human heart, called *qalb* in Arabic, is constantly in motion. It alternates between a weak and a strong level of faith which, in turn, is reflected in one's deeds.

Weakness of faith may be caused by committing evil deeds, being separated from righteous people and environments, seeking worldly pleasures and so on. In this book, the author discusses in detail the causes and goes on to prescribe remedies. You may be sick, but you will be unable to diagnose your disease by yourself; this is why it is important for all of us to read such a valuable book written by an experienced and knowledgeable author.

One of many beneficial works written by Shaykh al-Munajjid, this is a book which no Muslim should be without. It is a pleasure for IIPH to present it to our brothers and sisters, and we pray to Allah that it will be a source of great benefit to them.

May Allah accept the efforts of all those who contributed to the production of this book, and may it be acceptable to Him, *âmeen*.

Muhammad ibn Abdul Mohsin Al-Tuwaijri

Managing Director

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Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

INTRODUCTION

All praise is for Allah (*Subhânahu wa Ta'âlâ* — Glorified and Exalted is He). We praise Him and seek His help; we also seek refuge with Allah (ﷻ) from the evil of our own selves and from our evil deeds. No one can misguide the one whom Allah (ﷻ) leads to the straight path, and no one can guide the one whom He allows to go astray. I bear witness that there is no true god except Allah (ﷻ) alone, with no partner or associate. I also bear witness that Muhammad (*ṣalla Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam* — blessings and peace be upon him) is His slave and messenger.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾ (١٠٢)

(سورة آل عمران: ١٠٢)

﴿O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him].﴾

(*Qur'an* 3: 102)¹

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَجِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ

(سورة النساء: ١)

رَقِيبًا﴾ (١)

¹ The translations of the meanings of the Qur'anic verses in this book have been adapted from: Şaḥeeḥ International. *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*. Jeddah: Abul Qasim Publishing House, 1997.

﴿O humankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs [in regard to relations of kinship]. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.﴾ (Qur'an 4: 1)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧١﴾﴾

(سورة الاحزاب: ٧٠-٧١)

﴿O you who have believed, fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice. He will [then] amend for you your deeds and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly attained a great attainment.﴾

(Qur'an 33: 70-71)

The manifestation of weakness in faith has become widespread among Muslims. Many people complain about the harshness in their hearts, uttering such expressions as: "I feel a hardness in my heart," "I don't find pleasure in worship," "I feel that my faith is at an all-time low," "I am not affected by the recitation of the Qur'an," and "I fall into sin easily." Signs of this disease are visible upon many, and indeed this disease is the basis of every disaster and the cause of every subsequent deficiency and affliction.

The subject of hearts is sensitive but important. The heart has been named *al-qalb* [in Arabic] because of the speed with which it turns over and changes [*taqallub*].

In one *hadith* (a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers), the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The heart was named as such

due to its fluctuation. The example of the heart is like a feather caught on a tree trunk, with the wind turning it over and over.»² (Aḥmad; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

In another narration, he (ﷺ) stated: «The example of the heart is like a feather caught on open ground, with the wind turning it over and over.» (Recorded by Ibn Abi ‘Âṣim; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

The Prophet (ﷺ) described it as being extremely changeable: «The heart of the son of Ādam goes up and down faster than a violently boiling pot.» (Recorded by Ibn Abi ‘Âṣim; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

In another narration: «...it turns over more than [the contents of] a pot when boiling.» (A sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad, at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasâ’i)

Without a doubt, it is Allah (ﷻ) who transforms the hearts and controls them. ‘Amr ibn al-‘Âṣ (*raḍiya Allâhu ‘anhu* — may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say: «All the hearts of Adam’s children are between the two fingers of the Most Merciful, as if they were one heart that He controls as He wills.» Then the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) supplicated: «O Allah, turner of hearts, turn our hearts to your obedience.» (Muslim)

Given that:

﴿... أَتَىٰ اللَّهَ بِحُلُوبِ بَيْتِ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ...﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٢٤)

﴿...Allah intervenes between a person and his heart...﴾

(*Qur’an* 8: 24),

² Literally, from top to bottom.

and that none will escape punishment on the Day of Resurrection

﴿إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ﴾ (سورة الشعراء: ٨٩)

﴿But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart﴾

(*Qur'an* 26: 89),

as well as the fact that Allah (ﷻ) promises destruction

﴿... فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ...﴾ (سورة الزمر: ٢٢)

﴿...to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah...﴾

(*Qur'an* 39: 22),

while the promise of paradise is for those

﴿مَنْ خَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ الْغَيْبَ وَجَاءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُّنِيبٍ﴾ (سورة ق: ٣٣)

﴿Who feared the Most Merciful unseen and came with a heart returning [in repentance]﴾

(*Qur'an* 50: 33)

— it is necessary for the believers to probe their hearts and be aware of the location and cause of any sickness. After this acknowledgement, they should hasten to treat it before their hearts are overcome by a stain³ and destroyed. The matter is both important and urgent, because Allah (ﷻ) has warned us about hearts that are hard, locked, diseased, blind, covered, inverted and sealed.

³ «No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.» (*Qur'an* 83: 14). The Prophet (ﷺ) explained: «When a person commits a sin, a black mark is etched onto his heart; if he ceases and seeks forgiveness, his heart is wiped clean. If he repeats it, the black stain increases until it eventually envelops the heart. This is the stain that Allah has mentioned in His Book.» (An authentic hadith recorded by Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasâ'i).

What follows is an effort to make the reader familiar with the symptoms of the disease called ‘weak faith,’ along with its causes and its treatment. I ask Allah (ﷻ) to benefit my Muslim brothers and sisters and me through this work and to fully reward those who have participated in its publication. We ask Him to soften our hearts and to guide us. Allah (ﷻ) is the best ally; He is sufficient for us and is the best disposer of our affairs.

Chapter 1

Symptoms of weak faith

Weak faith is a disease that has numerous symptoms and indications, including:

1. Falling into sin and performing actions that are unlawful

Some people are persistent with evil deeds; they commit one sin after another with the result that they end up committing a variety of sins. Repetition of a sin leads to its becoming a habitual practice; eventually, its shamefulness is removed from the heart, and it is committed openly. Thus, the offender is included in the following hadith: «All of my *Ummah* (the global community of Muslims) may be forgiven except those who show sin openly. Among these is a man who committed a sin at night and Allah concealed it for him, but when morning came, he said: O so-and-so, yesterday I did this and that — while his Lord had spent the night concealing it for him. In the morning, he removed Allah's cover from himself.» (Bukhari)

2. Feelings of hardness and harshness in the heart

People might even reach a point where they feel their hearts have turned into rigid stones, issuing nothing and affected by nothing, as Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسَوَةً ...﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٧٤)

«Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder...» (Qur'an 2: 74)

The hard-hearted are not affected by admonitions about death or by the sight of dead people or funerals. They may have carried the body themselves and buried it in the ground, but for them, walking among graves is the same as walking among stones.

3. Carelessness during acts of worship

An example is the wandering of the mind during prayer, Qur'anic recitation, supplication, and the like. When people do not reflect upon the meaning of what they are saying, they recite in an automatic way — assuming that they are doing these acts regularly to begin with. Also, if they become accustomed to reciting a specific supplication at a specific time according to the *Sunnah* (the practice and collected sayings of Prophet Muhammad that together with the Qur'an forms the basis of Islamic law), they will not think about its meaning.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Allah does not accept supplication from a heart that is heedless and distracted.» (Recorded by at-Tirmidhi; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

4. Laziness about performing acts of obedience and worship, or neglecting them altogether

In this case, even if they are performed, they are simply empty movements, without spirit. Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, has described hypocrites as follows:

﴿... وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالَى ...﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٤٢)

﴿...And when they stand for prayer, they stand lazily...﴾

(Qur'an 4: 142)

Also included in this is the failure to take advantage of special seasons and times of worship, which shows that the people are not particularly concerned with obtaining any reward. They might postpone performing *Hajj* (the major pilgrimage to Makkah, a pillar of Islam that must be undertaken by every able Muslim at least once in his or her lifetime) even though they have the ability to do so, or pass up *jihad* (struggle or striving in the cause of Allah), or miss the congregational prayer and perhaps even the Friday congregational prayer.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Some people will continue to lag behind [joining] the first row until Allah keeps them behind in the fire.» (Recorded by Abu Dâwood; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

Such people experience no guilt when they sleep through an obligatory prayer. If they miss one of the regular *sunnah* (recommended, but not mandatory) prayers or other acts of worship, they have no desire to make it up. Eventually, they will come to neglect acts that are *sunnah* or are communal duties (meaning that the obligation is satisfied if anyone in the Muslim community performs it, but if no one does, then the entire community is blameworthy). They may, therefore, miss the prayer of *Eid*⁴ (one of two Islamic celebrations that take place at the end of the fasting month of *Ramadan* and at the culmination of the

⁴ Most scholars consider the Eid prayer a *sunnah* prayer, although some say that it is an obligation.

Hajj), the eclipse prayer or the funeral prayer. They are aware of the rewards, yet they choose to forgo them. This is quite contrary to those whom Allah (ﷻ) has described in His book, saying:

﴿... إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا
وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ﴾
(سورة الأنبياء: ٩٠)

﴿...Indeed, they used to hasten to good deeds and supplicate Us in hope and fear, and they were to Us humbly submissive.﴾

(*Qur'an* 21: 90)

They might also show laziness about performing the sunnah prayers, the optional late night prayers, and the optional mid- to late morning prayer, as well as the two-unit prayers for repentance or for guidance (when seeking the help of Allah in making a decision).

5. Depression, moodiness and reclusiveness

The individuals feel as if they are carrying a heavy burden; as a result, they become easily irritated, complaining about the smallest things. They become annoyed by the behaviour of the people around them and lose their tolerance with them.

The Prophet (ﷺ) described faith by saying: «Faith is patience and tolerance.» (Recorded by at-Ṭabarâni; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

He (ﷺ) described the believer as someone who: «befriends and is befriended, and there is no good in the one who neither befriends nor is befriended.» (Recorded by Ibn Ḥibbân with a sound chain of narrators)

6. Indifference to the verses of the Qur'an

These people are not affected by the Qur'an's promises or its threats, by its commands or its prohibitions, or by its description of the resurrection. Those whose faith is weak grow bored with hearing the Qur'an and are unable to continue reading it for very long; every time they open the Qur'an, they close it soon after.

7. Heedlessness concerning Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, and failure to remember Him and supplicate to Him

They find it difficult to remember to mention the name of Allah (ﷻ); their supplications are fleeting and superficial. Allah (ﷻ) has described the hypocrites as:

﴿...وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا﴾ (سورة النِّسَاء: ١٤٢)

﴿...not remembering Allah except a little.﴾ (Qur'an 4: 142)

8. Complacency when Allah's prohibitions are violated

Because the flames of concern and anger have been extinguished, these persons no longer deplore evil. They neither order what is right nor forbid what is wrong; their faces will not change for the cause of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) described such a heart afflicted with weakness in the following hadith: «Hearts will be exposed to trials like straws in a mat, one by one, so any heart that absorbs it is spotted with a black spot...» until it becomes as the Prophet (ﷺ) informed us at the end of the hadith: «...black and speckled like a clay mug that has tipped over, neither recognising right nor deploring wrong except what suits its own desire.» (Muslim)

The love of right and the dislike of wrong have been removed from the hearts of such people. Since both wrong and right are the same to them, what could motivate them to order or forbid anything? They might even hear that a wrong has been committed in the land and approve of it, thereby earning a sin similar to that of a person who actually witnessed and accepted it. This is similar to what the Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned in an authentic hadith: «When a sin is committed in the land, the one who was present and disliked it [and once he said: deplored it] is like one who was absent from it. And one who was absent from it but approved of it is like one who was present during it.» (Recorded by Abu Dâwood; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

Their approval, which is a deed of the heart, put them in the same position as one who was present and participating in the sin.

9. Love of prominence

There are several types:

a) Desire for a position of leadership without any consideration given to its responsibility and significance. This is what the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) warned about when he said: «Indeed, you will covet leadership, and it will be a regret [for you] on the Day of Resurrection. The first of it is [seemingly] good, and the last of it is evil.» (Bukhari)

That is because in the beginning, leadership brings wealth, influence and enjoyment, while it ends in being either killed or removed. Its consequences will be incurred on the Day of Resurrection.

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «If you like, I will inform you about leadership and what it is. The first of it is criticism, the second is

regret, and the third is punishment on the Day of Resurrection, except for the one who was just.» (Recorded by al-Haythami and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalâni; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

However, it is possible that an individual is genuinely concerned about performing his or her duty and shouldering the responsibility in a position for which there is no better candidate. Once the person gets the position of leadership, he or she exerts sincere effort, gives beneficial advice and practices justice, similar to Prophet Joseph (*‘alayhi as-salâm* — peace be upon him). In such cases, acquisition of leadership is good and noble. More often than not, though, the motivating factor is a wilful desire for leadership and for taking precedence over the more qualified. This desire manifests itself in usurping the rights of others and monopolising the centre of the government.

b) A liking for prominence in gatherings and a tendency to dominate conversations, forcing others to listen: This liking extends to being the one who decides and commands. Such ‘pulpits’ are what the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) warned us about when he said: «Beware of those slaughterhouses.» (Recorded by al-Bayhaqi; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

c) Desiring that others stand up when they enter, in order to satisfy the love of grandeur in their diseased souls. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) has said: «Whoever is pleased that the servants of Allah should stand up for him, let him take his place in a house of hellfire.» (Bukhari)

When Mu‘âwiyah (رضي الله عنه) went to Ibn az-Zubayr (رضي الله عنه), Ibn ‘Âmir rose, while Ibn az-Zubayr remained seated. Mu‘âwiyah (رضي الله عنه) said to Ibn ‘Âmir: Be seated, for I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say: «Whoever likes that men stand up for him, let him take his seat in hellfire.» (Abu Dâwood and Bukhari)

Such people are seized with anger if the Sunnah is practiced, as when someone begins from the right (in greeting or serving, for example). Upon entering a gathering, they also expect others to get up and give them their places, despite the Prophet's prohibition in the following hadith: «Let no one remove a man from his seat and then sit in it.» (Bukhari)

10) Stinginess and miserliness

Allah (ﷻ) has praised the *Anṣâr* (the Muslim citizens of Madinah who gave refuge to the Prophet and the other Muslim emigrants from Makkah), saying:

﴿... وَيُؤْتُونَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ...﴾

(سورة الحشر: ٩)

﴿...They...give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation...﴾ (Qur'an 59: 9)

This makes it clear that the successful are those who are protected from the stinginess of their souls. There is no doubt that weakness of faith generates stinginess; in fact, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Stinginess and faith are never combined in the heart of a servant.» (an-Nasâ'i; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

The danger of stinginess and its effects upon a person were outlined by the Prophet (ﷺ): «Beware of stinginess, for those before you were destroyed by stinginess. It ordered them to withhold, so they withheld; it ordered them to cut off relations, so they cut them off; and it inclined them towards immorality, so they became immoral.» (Abu Dâwood; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

The person with weak faith can hardly ever spend for the cause of Allah (ﷻ), even when voluntary charity is being encouraged,

the poverty of their Muslim brothers and sisters is evident, and calamities have struck many. There is nothing more profoundly accurate than Allah's words about this matter:

﴿هَآأَنَآ هَؤَآءَ نَدْعُونَ لِئَنفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يَبْخُلُ وَمَن يَبْخُلْ فَإِنَّمَا يَخِلْ عَن نَّفْسِهِ وَاللَّهُ الْغَنِيُّ وَأَنتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ وَإِن تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبَدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَلَكُمْ﴾
(سورة محمَّد: ٣٨)

«Here you are — those invited to spend in the cause of Allah — but among you are those who withhold [out of greed]. And whoever withholds only withholds [benefit] from himself; and Allah is the free of need, while you are the needy. And if you refuse, He will replace you with another people; then they will not be the likes of you.»
(Qur'an 47: 38)

11) Preaching [claiming or ordering] what they do not practice

Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِندَ اللَّهِ أَن تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣﴾﴾
(سورة الصف: ٢-٣)

«O you who have believed, why do you say what you do not do? Great is hatred in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do.»
(Qur'an 61: 2-3)

Undoubtedly, this is a kind of hypocrisy; those whose speech is contrary to their deeds are blameworthy in the sight of Allah (ﷻ) and disliked by others. The people of hellfire will discover the reality of the ones who used to order what was right in this

world but did not practice it themselves. Similarly, they would forbid what was wrong, while indulging in those very deeds.

12. Feeling pleased at the affliction of their Muslim brothers or sisters, whether it concerns a failure, loss, disaster or cessation of a blessing

Their pleasure is based on the fact that the others are no longer in a better condition than they are.

13. Judging matters merely on the basis of whether or not they are actually prohibited, and not caring if they are disliked

Some people, when they want to do something, do not ask if the deed is righteous. They only check to see whether or not that particular deed will be counted as a sin: “Is it actually forbidden, or merely disapproved of?” Such a mentality leads them to fall into the trap of doubtful and disapproved matters, which can eventually drag them towards what is prohibited. This is exactly what the Prophet (ﷺ) stated: «He who falls into doubtful matters will fall into what is prohibited, just as a shepherd who pastures his sheep around a private property can hardly prevent their crossing over into it.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

In fact, some people, when they seek a ruling about something and are told that it is prohibited, will even ask: “Is it a strong prohibition?” or “How much sin does it entail?” Such people do not really care about avoiding wrongdoing or bad deeds; they are prepared to commit lesser degrees of prohibited actions. Carelessness about small sins results in an attitude of audacity towards the prohibitions of Allah (ﷻ) in general, and in the removal of inhibitions against disobedience. That is why the

Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «I will certainly know people of my community who come on the Day of Resurrection with good deeds as great as the white mountains of Tihâmah, but Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, will render them as dust dispersed. Thawbân (رضي الله عنه) said: O Messenger of Allah, describe them to us; make them clear to us so that we will not be among them without knowing. He (ﷺ) said: Indeed, they are your brothers and of your race, and they take a portion of the night [for worship] as you do, except that they are people who violate the prohibitions of Allah when they are alone.» (Ibn Mâjah; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

Thus, you will find them falling into the prohibitions without reserve or hesitation. Such people have an easygoing attitude about sins as a result of their weak faith; they refuse to accept that they have done anything wrong.

Ibn Mas‘ood (رضي الله عنه) compared the state of the believer and the state of the hypocrite by saying: “Indeed, the believer sees his sins as if he were sitting at the foot of a mountain, fearing that it would fall upon him, while the wicked person sees his sins as a fly passing by his nose which is brushed away.” (Bukhari)⁵

14. Considering good deeds to be insignificant, and showing no concern for smaller ones

Imam Aḥmad narrated: «Abu Jariy al-Ḥujaymi said that he approached the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and said: O Messenger of Allah, we are people of the desert, so teach us something by which Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, will benefit us. He (ﷺ) said: Do not perceive any good deed as insignificant — even pouring from

⁵ See also: Aḥmad ibn ‘Ali Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalâni, *Taghleeq at-Ta’leeq* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islâmi).

your bucket into the container of one seeking water, and speaking to your brother with a pleasant face.» (Muslim and Aḥmad)

Drawing water from a well and pouring it for someone else might seem to be a small deed, but it should not be thought of as insignificant. The same is true of greeting a brother or sister with a pleasant face, or removing litter and dirt from the mosque, even if it is only a piece of straw. Perhaps that small deed might cause your sins to be forgiven. Such good deeds may seem too simple to be noteworthy, but Allah (ﷻ) appreciates such deeds from His servants and thereby forgives them.

Consider that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «A man came upon a tree branch in the road and said: By Allah, I will remove this so it will not harm the Muslims. Thus he entered paradise.» (Muslim)

A person who looks down upon small good deeds is in error. A sufficient penalty for that is being deprived of a great bounty. This is apparent from the following hadith, in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Whoever removes something harmful from the road has recorded a good deed, and whoever has a good deed at his or her disposal will enter paradise.» (Bukhari)

«Once Mu‘ādh (رضي الله عنه) was walking with a man. When he removed a rock from the path, the man asked him why. Mu‘ādh (رضي الله عنه) replied: I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say: One who removes a rock from the road has recorded a good deed, and whoever has a good deed will enter paradise.» (aṭ-Ṭabarānī; al-Albānī graded it as sound)

15. Indifference to the problems of Muslims



Those who are not moved by supplication, voluntary charity, or any other kind of help, are cold and indifferent towards the

affliction of their brothers and sisters in every corner of the earth, whether they are suffering from oppression, persecution by an enemy or other disasters. Such people are satisfied as long as they are free from such afflictions themselves, and that is due to a weak level of faith. The believer is quite different, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The believer among the people of faith is like a head to the body. The believer feels pain for the people of faith, just as the body feels pain from what is in the head.» (Aḥmad and as-Suyooṭī; al-Albānī graded it as reliable)

16. Loosening of the ties of brotherhood and sisterhood

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «No two persons hold affection for each other in the way of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, or in Islam, but that the first sin separates them. [In another narration: They are separated by a sin that one of them commits.]» (Bukhari)

This proves that the evil of disobedience can affect and undo the ties of brotherhood and sisterhood. The estrangement that people sometimes feel between themselves and their brothers and sisters is a result of a decrease in faith. This is caused by acts of disobedience, because Allah (ﷻ) removes the one who disobeys Him from the hearts of His servants. Hence, they live among them in the worst way, having lost their worth and having become objects of disdain and disrespect. They also lose the company of the believers and subsequently the defence of Allah (ﷻ), for:

(سورة الحج : ٣٨)  ... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدَافِعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا 

«Indeed, Allah defends those who have believed...»

(Qur'an 22: 38)

17. Lack of motivation to work for the religion, not striving to spread it or serve it

This is contrary to the example of the Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with them); when they entered the religion, they immediately felt responsible for striving to both promote and protect it. After at-Ṭufayl ibn 'Amr (رضي الله عنه) accepted Islam, how long did it take him to go and invite his people to Allah, the Mighty and Majestic? As soon as he entered the religion, he became aware of his great responsibility, so he asked the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) for permission to return to his people to invite them to Allah (ﷻ). Today, after adhering to the religion, people remain dormant for a long period of time before they reach the stage of inviting others to Allah (ﷻ).

The Companions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) practiced what was required by those entering the religion: animosity toward the disbelievers, disassociation from them, and breaking away from them. When Thumâmah bin Athâl, chief of the Yamâmah people, was taken prisoner [by the Muslims] and tied up in the mosque, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) presented Islam to him. Allah (ﷻ) enlightened his heart; he accepted Islam and went to perform *'umrah* (the minor pilgrimage). When he reached Makkah, he said to the disbelievers of *Quraysh* (the dominant tribe there at the time, whose society was based on polytheism): "You will not receive a single grain of wheat from Yamâmah unless the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) allows it." (recorded by Bukhari, *Fath al-Bâri*)

His break from and economic boycott of the disbelievers, and his employment of every available means to serve the cause of Allah (ﷻ), were immediate because his firm faith required these deeds from him.

18. Panic and fear at the time of an affliction or problem

When struck with misfortunes or trials, some people will be found trembling, unbalanced, distracted with a fixed gaze, and confused. In their view, all the ways out are closed, so anxieties pile up on them, leaving them unable to face reality with firm and strong hearts. All this is due to the weakness in their faith; if their faith was strong, they would have been steadfast and faced the greatest misfortunes and severest trials with strength and determination.

19. An abundance of arguments and disputes, which hardens the heart

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «No people went astray after they had been upon guidance except that they were given to argument.» (at-Tirmidhi; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

Arguing without proof and without valid intentions leads to distancing themselves from the straight path. It is very sad that people today bicker profusely about falsehood, confronting each other without knowledge or guidance from the enlightening book (the Qur'an) and the Sunnah. Even if they had such knowledge, the following hadith should be sufficient motivation for them to give up this blameworthy trait.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «I am responsible for a house in the fields of paradise for the one who ceases disputing even though he or she is right.» (Abu Dâwood; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

20. Attachment to and love of the world, and feeling ease therein

The hearts are attached to this world to the extent that their owners feel pain when they miss any of its pleasures, such as

wealth, influence, position or homes. They also consider themselves to be deprived and unfortunate because they cannot obtain what others have obtained. They are further hurt and distressed when they see their Muslim brothers and sisters having gained some of the shares of this world that they themselves missed out on. As a result, they might envy them and wish that those blessings were taken away from the other person. This is inconsistent with faith, according to the Prophet's saying: «Envy and faith are not combined in the heart of a servant.» (an-Nasâ'i; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

21. Complete rationalisation of speech and behaviour, and loss of any impression of belief

One can hardly find in the words of such people any trace of reference to the Qur'an or the Sunnah or even the words of the early scholars (may Allah have mercy upon them).

22. Exaggerated self-interest

People pay excessive attention to food, drink, clothing, the home, means of transport and various luxuries. They embellish their personalities and exert themselves in order to purchase fine clothes and adornments for the house, spending too much time and money upon unnecessary improvements while some of their fellow Muslims are in greater need of that money. Eventually, they drown themselves in luxury and extravagance, which has been prohibited. Mu'âdh ibn Jabal (رضي الله عنه) related that when the Prophet (ﷺ) sent him to Yemen, he instructed him to: «Beware of luxury, for the servants of Allah are not those who live in luxury.» (Ahmad; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

Chapter 2

Causes of weak faith

There are many reasons for weakness in faith, some of which are associated with symptoms that we have discussed previously, such as falling into sins and excessive preoccupation with worldly pursuits. The following are some additional causes.

1. Remaining distant from an atmosphere of faith for a long period of time

Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, has said:

﴿الَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ﴾
(سورة الحديد: ١٦)

«Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth? And let them not be like those who were given the scripture before, and a long period passed over them, so their hearts hardened; and many of them are defiantly disobedient.» (Qur'an 57: 16)

The verse clearly states that being away for a long time from the environment of belief is conducive to the weakening of faith in the heart. For example, those who leave their fellow Muslims for a

long period due to travel, work or other reasons, miss the atmosphere of belief that they used to enjoy and from which they drew strength of heart. This is because believers are in a minority by themselves and in the majority when they are together with their fellow Muslim brothers and sisters.

Al-Hasan al-Baṣri said: “Our brothers are dearer to us than our families; our families remind us of the world, while our brothers remind us of the hereafter.”

Prolonged absence leads to estrangement, which, after some time, turns into distaste for the atmosphere of faith. Subsequently, the hearts become hardened and darkened, with the light of faith extinguished. This partly explains the change in some people when they travel during the holidays or are transferred to another place of work or study.

2. Distance from righteous examples

Some people learn from good and pious men and women, acquiring from them beneficial knowledge, strength of faith and motivation to do good deeds. They commit themselves to this person and take him or her as a role model, so if they are away from that individual for a while, they will experience a hardening of the heart.

When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) passed away and was covered by the earth, the Companions said: “Our hearts denied us.” They were afflicted with gloom because their educator, teacher and example had died. Their description of themselves was recorded as: “like sheep during a rainy winter night.” The Prophet (ﷺ), however, left behind him men like mountains, all of them suitable as successors, who became role models for one

another. Today the Muslim Ummah is in dire need of good examples like them.

3. Failure to seek religious knowledge and interact with the books of the early scholars and other books that liven the heart

There are books that stir faith in the hearts of the readers and motivate their souls. The foremost of these is the book of Allah (ﷻ), then books of *Hadith* (the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad that, with the Qur'an, form the basis of Islamic law), followed by the books of recognised scholars explaining and giving their advice on delicate matters. There are books by those scholars who excel in presenting the religious tenets and required beliefs in a manner that awakens the heart, such as Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Rajab and others.

Being cut off from such books, while confining their reading to intellectual matters, rulings without any sources given, linguistics and fundamentals, for example, can sometimes harden the hearts. This is not to condemn books of language, fundamentals and other subjects; my intention is to alert those who neglect the books of Qur'anic commentary and Hadith, because these are the books that connect the heart to Allah, the Mighty and Majestic. Reading the *Ṣaḥeeḥs* of Bukhari and Muslim, for example, makes the readers feel as though they are living with the Messenger (ﷺ) and his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) in the atmosphere of the first generation of Muslims; they sense the fragrance of faith through their life stories and the incidents that took place during their time.

A poet said:

*The people of Hadith are the family of the Prophet.
Even if they were not companions to his person,
they are, to his style, companions.*

The effect of neglecting these books is evident upon those who study subjects that are unrelated to Islam and formulated without any reference to Islam. The same is true of those who are devoted to fiction and love stories, as well as those who habitually follow, with great concern and interest, unimportant affairs in newspapers and magazines.

4. Presence of a Muslim in an environment saturated with disobedience to Allah

In such a scenario, one person is proudly talking about a sin he has committed, another is absorbed in the words and melodies of a song, a third is smoking, a fourth is spreading open a pornographic magazine, and a fifth is cursing and insulting — not to mention the gossiping and backbiting and so on.

Some surroundings do not remind people of anything except worldly affairs. Most office meetings and other gatherings are focused on commerce, jobs, finance, consultations, work problems, advances, promotions, assignments, and so on, which are among the main concerns of many people and the subjects of their conversation.

As for homes, one can speak easily about the deluge of calamities and evils that bring perspiration to the brows of true Muslims and break their hearts. Brazen songs and immoral films fill the homes of Muslims, and there is unlawful social mixing between the sexes. In such environments, the hearts undoubtedly become diseased and hardened.

5. Excessive preoccupation with this world, to the point that the heart becomes a slave to it

The Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Miserable is the slave of the *dinar* and the *dirham* (gold and silver coins).» (Bukhari)

He also said: «Sufficient for one of you from worldly things is the equivalent of the provisions of a rider.» (Recorded by as-Suyooti and at-Ṭabarâni; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

This essentially means that a small amount, just enough to enable one to reach his or her destination, is sufficient. The opposite is obvious in these days of materialism and greed for more and more worldly goods: people are running after business ventures, professions, corporate shares, and so on. This is in accordance with what the Prophet (ﷺ) informed us: «Indeed Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, said: We sent wealth for the establishment of prayer and giving of charity. If a son of Adam had a valley [of wealth], he would like to have another; and if he had two valleys, he would want to add a third to them. Nothing will [truly] fill the inside of a son of Adam except earth. Then Allah (ﷻ) will forgive the one who has repented.» (Bukhari and Aḥmad)

6. Excessive preoccupation with property, spouse and children

Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, has said:

﴿وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ﴾ ... ﴿٢٨﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٢٨)

«And know that your properties and your children are but a trial...» (Qur'an 8: 28)

He (ﷺ) has also said:

﴿زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ
 مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ذَلِكَ
 مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَقَابِلِ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٤)

«Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire — of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses and cattle, and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return [meaning paradise].»

(Qur'an 3: 14)

This verse warns that if the love of such things, the foremost of these being spouses and children, takes precedence over obedience to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ), it is repugnant and blameworthy. However, if the love of these things is within the limits of what is lawful, while obedience to Allah (ﷻ) is observed, then it is good and praiseworthy.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «I have been given from this world the love of wives and good scent, but my greatest pleasure is in prayer.» (Aḥmad and an-Nasâ'i; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

Many people follow the wishes of their spouses in unlawful matters and allow their children to distract them from obeying and worshipping Allah, despite the Prophet's saying: «A child is a cause of grief, cowardice, ignorance and stinginess.» (aṭ-Ṭabarâni; its chain of narrators is acceptable)

Stinginess: When individuals intend to spend in the cause of Allah (ﷻ), the devil reminds them of their children, so they refrain from spending, saying: "My children have more right to this money... they will need it when I am gone, so I will keep it for them."

Ignorance: Parents are kept away from seeking and obtaining knowledge. They are prevented from attending meetings and reading books that will provide them with it.

Cowardice: When men want to fight in the cause of Allah (ﷺ), the devil comes to them and says: “You will be killed, and your children will become orphans in distress.” Consequently, they refrain from going for jihad.

Grief: When their child is ill, the parents grieve for them; when children ask for something that the parents are unable to provide, the parents are saddened. When they grow up and are undutiful to their parents, this is a continual source of grief and distress.

All this does not mean that one should not marry and have children, or that one should abandon the raising of children. It is only a warning against being preoccupied with them in prohibited ways and neglecting the remembrance of Allah (ﷻ).

As for the trial through wealth, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «For every community is a trial, and the trial for my community is wealth.» (Recorded by at-Tirmidhi with a sound chain of narrators)

Greed for wealth is more corrupting for the religion than a wolf prevailing in a pen of sheep. That is the meaning of the Prophet’s saying: «Two hungry wolves released among sheep are no more ruinous to them than the greediness of a person for wealth and status is to his religion.» (An authentic hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

This is why the Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged people to be satisfied with what is sufficient for them, without striving for the excesses that distract them from the remembrance of Allah (ﷻ).

The Messenger (ﷺ) said: «It is enough wealth for you to have a servant and transport to use in the way of Allah.» (Aḥmad; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

He also threatened those who collect and amass wealth – with the exception of those who give in charity: «Woe to the hoarders, except for one who did with his wealth such-and-such and such-and-such, four: on his right, on his left, in front of him and behind him.» (Ibn Mâjah; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

He meant giving wealth through various kinds of charities and kindnesses.

7. Extended hope and expectation that one will still be alive at a future time

Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿ذَرَّهُمْ يَأْكُلُوا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوا وَيُلْهِمُ الْأَمَلُ فَسَوْفَ يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

(سورة الحجر: ٣)

﴿Let them eat and enjoy themselves and be diverted by [false] hope, for they are going to know.﴾ (Qur'an 15: 3)

‘Ali (عليه السلام) said: “The most frightening thing I fear for you is the following of one’s desires and extended hope. Following desires averts one from the truth, and extended hope makes one forget the hereafter.” (Recorded by Bukhari in *Fath al-Bâri*)

Some Companions were quoted as saying: “Four things belong to wretchedness: indifference of the eye, hardness of the heart, extended hope, and greediness for what is in the world.”

Extensive expectation of continuity generates laziness in worship, postponement of repentance, desire for this world,

neglect of the hereafter and hardness in the heart. This is because sensitivity and clarity in the heart come from being reminded of death and the grave, of rewards and penalties, and of the terrors of the resurrection. Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿... فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ ...﴾ (سورة الحديد: ١٦)

﴿...And a long period passed over them, so their hearts hardened...﴾ (Qur'an 57: 16)

It has been said: "Those who limit their expectations also lessen their anxiety and enlighten their heart, because when they bring death to mind, they exert effort in obedience." (*Fath al-Bâri*)

8. An excess of food, sleep, staying up late, and talking and mixing with people

Overeating slows down the brain and burdens the body, keeping it from worshipping Allah (ﷻ) and instead nourishing the currents of Satan in a person. It has been said: "Whoever eats too much and drinks too much will sleep too much and lose much reward."

Talking too much hardens the heart; too much socialising prevents people from being alone with their own souls, taking them to account and considering how to deal with them. Too much laughter causes the life (sensitivity) of the hearts to be extinguished, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Do not be excessive in laughter, for too much laughter deadens the heart.» (Ibn Mâjah; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

Time that is not filled with obedience to Allah (ﷻ) brings about barren hearts, which benefit neither from the admonitions of the Qur'an nor the exhortations of faith.

The causes of weak faith are too many to enumerate. An intelligent reader, however, may receive guidance from what has been mentioned here, as well as what has not been mentioned. We ask Allah (ﷻ) to purify our hearts and protect us from the evil within ourselves.

Chapter 3

Curing weak faith

Al-Ḥâkim narrated in his *Mustadrak*, and at-Ṭabarâni in his *Mu'jam*, that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Faith becomes worn out inside one of you just as a garment becomes worn out, so ask Allah to renew the faith in your hearts.» (al-Ḥaythami graded it as reliable)

By that, he meant that faith deteriorates as a garment does when it becomes old and threadbare. The hearts of believers are sometimes overcome by the clouds of disobedience; thus, they become dark, as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) illustrated in an authentic hadith: «Among hearts, there is no heart that does not have a cloud like that of the moon, in that the moon shines but is darkened when covered by a cloud, and when it passes away from it, it gives light.» (at-Ṭabarâni; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

The moon's light is covered by a passing cloud, which disperses after a time. Similarly, the hearts of the believers are sometimes covered by a dark cloud of disobedience, blocking the light and leaving the people in darkness and desolation. When they exert themselves towards increasing their faith, seeking help from Allah (ﷻ), the clouds are dispersed, and the light of their heart shines once again.

When trying to understand weakness of faith and plan its treatment, it is important to focus on the knowledge that faith

increases and decreases. Among the basic beliefs of *Ahl as-Sunnah wal-jamâ'ah* (people of the Sunnah and the community) are that faith comprises pronunciation by the tongue, belief in the heart, and deeds by the body, and also that faith increases through obedience and decreases through disobedience. The following are some of the proofs from the Qur'an and Sunnah:

﴿... لِيَزِدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ...﴾ (سورة الفتح: ٤)

﴿...that they would increase in faith along with [that is, in addition to] their [present] faith...﴾ (Qur'an 48: 4)

﴿أَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هَذِهِ إِيمَانًا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ﴾ (سورة التوبة: ١٢٤)

﴿...which of you has this increased faith? As for those who believed, it has increased them in faith, while they are rejoicing.﴾ (Qur'an 9: 124)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Whoever among you sees a wrong, let him change it by his hand; if he is unable to do so, then by his tongue; and if he is unable to do that, then in his heart; and that is the weakest level of faith.» (Muslim)

The effect of obedience and disobedience on the extent of faith is a matter that is well known, witnessed and experienced. For instance, a man goes out to the market, where he gazes at women who are not properly covered and hears the shouting and improper speech of the people. He then goes to a graveyard; entering and contemplating there, he soon feels his heart softening. He surely finds a manifest difference between these two states, for the heart changes quickly.

This concept was also stated by one of the early scholars, who said that people have understanding when they pay attention to their faith and what has decreased thereof, when they know whether their faith is increasing or decreasing, and when they recognise how the suggestions of the devil come to them.⁶

It should be known that abandoning obligatory acts or committing unlawful acts because of a decrease in faith is a dangerous condition, and the persons who do so are at fault. They must repent to Allah and immediately begin to correct themselves. Sometimes, though, a weak level of faith does not lead people to abandon what is mandatory or engage in what is unlawful; it only makes them discontinue an optional meritorious deed, for example. If this happens, they must take control, focus upon what is appropriate, and improve themselves until they return to their regular state of activity and exertion in worship. This is what one infers from the Prophet's statement: «You do deeds with enthusiasm, but for every enthusiasm, there is an intermission. One whose intermission is towards my Sunnah has succeeded, and one whose intermission is toward something else is destroyed.» (Recorded by Aḥmad with a sound chain of narrators)

Before discussing the treatment, it should be noted that many of those who feel harshness in their hearts search for cures outside themselves. They want to depend upon others to help them, whereas it is within their capacity, if they wish, to treat themselves. This is the primary and proper way to go about it, because faith is a relationship between the servants and their Lord. The following are a number of lawful Islamic methods that can enable Muslims to cure themselves of weak faith and a hard heart,

⁶ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣeedat an-Nooniyah* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islâmi, 1962).

but this will happen only when they depend upon Allah (ﷻ) and begin to exert effort.

1. Reflection upon the meanings of the noble Qur'an,

which Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, has revealed as clarification for all things. It is a light through which the Exalted guides whom He wills among His servants, and it undoubtedly contains a significant and effective treatment. Allah (ﷻ) has said:

﴿وَنَزَّلَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ...﴾ (٨٢)

(سورة الإسراء: ٨٢)

«And We send down of the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy for the believers...» (Qur'an 17: 82)

Treatment is through thought and reflection.

«The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to reflect upon the book of Allah (ﷻ) and repeat it while standing in the night prayers. One night, he stood repeating one verse from Allah's book while praying, not going beyond it until morning appeared. The words were as follows:

﴿إِن تَعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَبْدُكَ وَإِن تَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾ (١١٨)

(سورة المائدة: ١١٨)

«If you should punish them — indeed they are Your servants; but if You forgive them — indeed it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.» (Qur'an 5: 118)»

(Ibn Mâjah and an-Nasâ'i; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

The Prophet (ﷺ) used to reflect upon the Qur'an a great deal. Ibn Hîbbân narrated in his *Ṣaḥeeḥ* with a sound chain from 'Aṭâ',

who said: «I entered the house of ‘Ā’ishah (*raḍiya Allāhu ‘anhā* — may Allah be pleased with her) with ‘Ubaydullāh ibn ‘Umayr, and he said: Tell us about the most wondrous thing you observed from Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ).

She wept and said: He got up one night, saying: O ‘Ā’ishah, let me worship my Lord.

I said [to him]: By Allah, I like to be near you, but I like what pleases you.

So he got up and purified himself [made ablution]; then he stood in prayer and wept until his chest was wet. He continued weeping and did not cease until the ground was wet. Bilāl came to make the call for [the dawn] prayer, and when he saw him weeping, he asked: O Messenger of Allah, you weep while Allah has forgiven all your past and future sins?

He replied: Then should I not be a grateful servant? Some verses were revealed to me tonight; woe to one who recites them and does not reflect upon them:

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ... ﴿١٩١﴾﴾
(سورة آل عمران: ١٩٠-١٩١)

«Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding — who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth...»
(*Qur'an* 3: 190-191)»

(Muslim and Ibn Hibbân)

This proves that it is a duty of a Muslim to reflect upon such verses.

The Qur'an contains verses about the oneness of Allah, as well as promises and threats, rulings, information, narratives, manners and morals. Its effects upon the soul are wide-ranging; there are some chapters that frighten the soul more than others, as illustrated by the Prophet's words: «*Soorah (Chapter) Hood and its sisters have given me grey hair prematurely.*» (Recorded by at-Tirmidhi with a sound chain of narrators)

In another narration, he said: «*Hood, al-Wâqî'ah, al-Mursalât, 'Amma Yatasâ'aloona [soorat an-Naba'] and at-Takweer*» (at-Tirmidhi; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

These chapters of the Qur'an turned the hair of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) grey because they describe the realities of the faith and the great responsibilities that come with it. Their burden filled the heart of the Messenger (ﷺ) to the extent that the effects appeared on his hair and body.

(سورة هود: ١١٢) ﴿فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ ...﴾

﴿So remain on a right course as you have been commanded, [you] and those who have turned back with you [to Allah]...﴾

(Qur'an 11: 112)

His Companions would also recite, reflect and be affected. Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) was a compassionate man with a sensitive heart. When he led the people in prayer and recited the words of Allah (ﷻ), he could not restrain himself from weeping. 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) once fell ill from the impact of Allah's words:

(سورة الطور: ٧-٨) ﴿إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ لَوَاقِعٌ ﴿٧﴾ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دَافِعٍ ﴿٨﴾﴾

«Indeed, the punishment of your Lord will occur. Of it there is no preventer.»
(Qur'an 52: 7-8)⁷

His sobbing could be heard behind the rows when he recited Allah's quotation from the Prophet Jacob (عليه السلام):

﴿... إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بَنِي وَحُرْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ ...﴾ (سورة يوسف: ٨٦)

«...I only complain of my suffering and my grief to Allah...»
(Qur'an 12: 86)⁸

'Uthmân (عليه السلام) said: "If our hearts were pure, we could not get enough of the words of Allah." He was later martyred, a victim of injustice, with his blood on his Qur'an. (al-Bayhaqi)

There are numerous narrations about the Companions in this regard. Ayyoob (عليه السلام) related that he heard Sa'eed bin Jubayr repeat this verse in prayer more than twenty times:

﴿وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٨١)

«And fear a day when you will be returned to Allah...»
(Qur'an 2: 281)⁹

It is the last verse of the Qur'an that was revealed; it ends:

﴿... ثُمَّ تَوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٨١)

(سورة البقرة: ٢٨١)

⁷ The narration and its sources are found in Abu al-Fidâ' 'Imâd ad-Deen Isma'eel ibn 'Umar Ibn Katheer, *Tafseer Ibn Katheer* (Dâr ash-Sha'b), 7:406.

⁸ Abul-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzi, *Manâqib 'Umar*.

⁹ Muhammad ibn Aḥmad ad-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam an-Nubalâ'* (Cairo: Dar El Hadith).

﴿...Then every soul will be compensated for what it earned, and they will not be treated unjustly.﴾ (Qur'an 2: 281)

Ibrâheem ibn Bashar said: "The verse during which 'Ali ibn al-Fadheel died was:

﴿وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ تُفْعَلُو عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُوا يَلَيِّنَا نُرَدُّ ...﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ٢٧)

﴿If you could but see when they are made to stand before the fire and will say: Oh, would that we could be returned [to life on earth]...﴾ (Qur'an 6: 27)

He died in that place, and I was among those who prayed at his funeral — may Allah have mercy upon him."¹⁰

Even during the prostrations of recitation (prostrations that the Prophet used to make after reciting specific verses), they were affected. Take the story of the man (may Allah have mercy upon him) who recited:

﴿وَيَخِرُّونَ لِلْأَذْقَانِ يَبْكُونَ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ خُشُوعًا﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ١٠٩)

﴿And they fall upon their faces weeping, and the Qur'an increases them in humble submission.﴾ (Qur'an 17: 109)

He prostrated there, then said, rebuking himself: "This is the prostration, but where is the weeping?"

It is most important to reflect upon the examples given in the Qur'an. This is because whenever Allah (ﷻ) gives us examples in the Qur'an, He encourages thinking and remembrance. In one place, He has said:

﴿...وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ﴾ (سورة إبراهيم: ٢٥)

¹⁰ Ibid.

﴿...And Allah presents examples for the people that perhaps they will be reminded.﴾ (Qur'an 14: 25)

He has also said:

﴿... وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦﴾﴾

(سورة الحشر: ٢١)

﴿...And these examples We present to the people, that perhaps they will give thought.﴾ (Qur'an 59: 21)

One of the pious predecessors contemplated an example from the Qur'an, but its meaning was not clear to him, so he wept. When asked why, he said: "Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, says:

﴿... وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾﴾

(سورة العنكبوت: ٤٣)

﴿And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge.﴾ (Qur'an 29: 43)

I have not understood the example, and I weep for the loss of knowledge."

Allah (ﷻ) has presented many examples to us in the Qur'an. Some of them are: the one who kindled a fire, the one who shouts at that which does not hear, the grain seed which grows seven spikes, the dog that pants, the donkey that carries volumes of books, the fly, the spider, the blind seeing and the deaf hearing, ashes blown by a strong wind, a sound tree and a rotten tree, rain falling from the sky, a niche within which is a lamp, a slave who is owned and incapable of doing anything by himself, a man owned by two quarrelling partners, and so on. We should return to the verses containing examples and give them special attention and

care, seeking to derive the lessons that Allah (ﷻ) has placed therein for us to ponder and to implement in our own lives.

Ibn al-Qayyim has summarised what a Muslim should do to treat hardness of heart with the Qur'an:

The basis of that is in two things: first, to transfer your heart from the habitat of this world to that of the hereafter, and then to put it completely in confrontation with the meanings of the Qur'an, the elucidation of them and reflecting on them, comprehending what was intended by their revelation while taking your share from each of its verses and letting it descend upon the disease in your heart. When it has descended on the disease in your heart, it will be cured by the permission of Allah (ﷻ).

2. Consciousness of Allah's greatness, knowledge of His names and attributes; reflecting upon them and understanding their meanings

This knowledge must settle in the heart and spread to other body parts, whose deeds will express what the heart has perceived. This is because the heart is their sovereign, and they are its soldiers; thus, they are sound when it is sound, and they are corrupt when it is corrupt.

The words from the Qur'an and Sunnah concerning Allah's grandeur are many. When the Muslims contemplate them, their hearts tremble and their souls become humble before the Most High, the Most Great. The limbs submit to the All-Hearing and All-Knowing, and they increase in humility before the Lord of the first and last generations. This is due to the awareness of His many names and attributes, for He is the Most Great, the Controller, the Compeller, the Superior, the Powerful, the Prevailing, the Grand

and the Exalted. He is the Living who does not die, while the *jinn* (non-human, rational beings created by Allah from fire, often referred to as 'demons' or 'devils') and humankind die. He is the Subjugator over His servants. Even the angels and the thunder praise Him, from fear of Him. He is the Mighty Avenger, the Sustainer who sleeps not, who encompasses all things in His knowledge and who knows what deceives the eyes and what the breasts conceal. He has described the vastness of His knowledge by saying:

﴿وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظِلْمَةٍ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَابِسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ٥٩)

﴿And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. And no grain is there within the darkness of the earth and no moist or dry [thing] but that it is [written] in a clear record.﴾ (Qur'an 6: 59)

Of His greatness is what He informed us about Himself:

﴿وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَالسَّمَوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَنَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ﴾ (سورة الزمر: ٦٧)

﴿They have not appraised Allah with true appraisal [appreciation of His attributes], while the earth entirely will be [within] His grip on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens will be folded in His right hand.﴾ (Qur'an 39: 67)

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Allah will take hold of the earth on the Day of Resurrection and fold up the heavens in His right hand. Then He will say: I am the Sovereign. Where are the kings of the earth?» (Bukhari)

The mind dissolves and the heart trembles when contemplating the story of Moses (عليه السلام), when he said:

﴿...رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَنِي وَلَكِنْ أَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَنِي فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّى رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَى صَعِقًا...﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ١٤٣)

﴿...My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You. So Allah said: You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me. But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level and Moses fell unconscious...﴾ (Qur'an 7: 143)

When the Prophet (ﷺ) explained this verse, he recited it and said, gesturing with his hand: «Thus [and he put his thumb on the highest joint of the little finger and then said:] the mountain sank.» (at-Tirmidhi; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

This means that Allah (ﷻ) only appeared to that small extent, yet this was enough to cause the mountain to sink into the ground.

The Prophet (ﷺ) described Allah (ﷻ) thus: «His screen is light; if He should remove it, the splendour of His Face would burn His creation to the extent of His vision.» (Muslim)

The Messenger (ﷺ) spoke of Allah's grandeur, saying: «When Allah decrees a matter in the heavens, the angels beat with their wings in compliance with His word like a chain upon stone until:

﴿... إِذَا فُزِعَ عَنْ قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا الْحَقُّ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ﴾
 (سورة سبأ: ٢٣)

﴿...when terror is removed from their hearts, they will say [to one another]: What has your Lord said? They will say: The truth — and He is the Most High, the Grand.﴾ (*Qur'an 34: 23*)» (Bukhari)

There are many more texts on this subject; the bottom line is that consciousness of Allah's grandeur through contemplation of these texts and others is among the most beneficial components in the treatment of weak faith.

Ibn al-Qayyim described the greatness of Allah (ﷻ) in sweet and beautiful words. He said:

He manages the affairs of His subjects; He orders and prohibits, He creates and provides, He causes death and life, He honours and humiliates, and He rotates the night and the day. He alternates days [of varying conditions] among the people, and He overthrows nations, doing away with one and producing another. His command and authority are in effect throughout the regions of the heavens and on the earth and whatever is upon it and beneath it or in the seas or the air. He has encompassed everything in knowledge and counted all things in number. His hearing is inclusive of all sounds; no voice is unrecognised by Him or obscure to Him. He hears the clamour in their different languages for their various needs, and He is not distracted by hearing one from hearing another. He is not confused by numerous requests and is not weary of the persistent demand of those in need. His vision encompasses all that is visible; He sees the movement of a black ant upon a massive rock during a dark night. The unseen to Him is seen, and the secret to Him is known.

﴿يَسْأَلُهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ﴾ (سورة الرَّحْمَنِ : ٢٩)

«Whoever is within the heavens and earth asks Him; each day He is bringing about a matter [for each of His creatures].»

(*Qur'an* 55: 29)

— forgiving a sin, relieving an anxiety, removing a distress, comforting a broken individual, enriching a poor person, guiding one who is lost, directing one who is confused, helping one who is in trouble, feeding one who is hungry, clothing one who is naked, curing one who is ill, freeing one from a trial, accepting one who repents, rewarding one who does good, supporting one who is oppressed, breaking a tyrant, covering a fault, relieving a fear, and raising the positions of some and lowering others.

If all the inhabitants of His heavens and earth, from the first of His creation to the last of them, humans and jinn, were as righteous as the heart of the most righteous man among them, it would not increase anything of His dominion. By the same token, if the first of His creation and the last of them, humans and jinn, were as wicked as the heart of the most wicked man among them, it would not decrease anything of His dominion. If all the inhabitants of His heavens and earth, humans and jinn, whether alive or dead, moist or dry, stood in one place and asked something of Him, and He gave all of them what they asked for, it would not decrease what He has by even an atom's weight.

He is the First, preceded by nothing, and the Last, followed by nothing; the Ascendant, with nothing above Him; and the Intimate, with nothing nearer than Him. Blessed and exalted is He, having the most right to be remembered and worshipped, the most worthy of gratitude, most gracious of rulers, and most generous of anyone asked. He is the Sovereign having no partners, the unique

with no equal, the Eternal Recourse without [need of] offspring, the Sublime with nothing resembling Him. Everything will be destroyed except His countenance, and everything will cease except His sovereignty.

He cannot be obeyed except by His permission and cannot be disobeyed except according to His knowledge; He rewards obedience and forgives disobedience. Every affliction from Him is just, and every blessing from Him is a favour. He is the nearest witness and the closest guardian. He controls all creatures, registers all effects, and decrees all life spans. Hearts are manifest to Him, and a secret is the same as an announcement. His gift is a word, and His punishment is a word:

﴿إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ﴾ (سورة يس: ٨٢)

«His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it: Be, and it is.» (Qur'an 36: 82)¹¹

3. Seeking religious knowledge

This knowledge leads to imbibing fear of Allah (ﷻ) and additional faith in Him as He, the Exalted, has said:

﴿... إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ عَلِمُوا مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ﴾ (سورة فاطر: ٢٨)

(سورة فاطر: ٢٨)

«...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...» (Qur'an 35: 28)

¹¹ Adapted from Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Al-Wābil as-Sayyib wa Rāfi' al-Kalim at-Tayyib* (Maktaba Dār al-Bayyān).

Not equal in faith are those who know and those who do not know. Consider the state of the one who knows the details of Islamic law; the meaning of the two testimonials of faith (that there is none worthy of worship other than Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) and their requirements; the details of what occurs after death, the torment in the grave, the terrors and scenes of the resurrection and gathering; the pleasure of paradise and torment of hellfire; the wisdom of Islamic law regarding what is permitted and prohibited; the details of the Prophet's biography; and so on. Compare such an individual with the one who has little or no knowledge of Islam. How could such a person be equal to the ones who are ignorant of the religion: its rulings and its revelations regarding matters that are not apparent? Their share of religion is merely imitation, and their knowledge is of poor quality.

﴿... قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ...﴾ (سورة الزمر: ٩)

﴿...Say: Are those who know equal to those who do not know?...﴾

(*Qur'an* 39: 9)

4. Regular attendance at circles of dhikr (remembering Allah through praising and supplicating to Him)

This leads to an increase of faith for several reasons, among which are: the remembrance of Allah (ﷻ), being covered by mercy, the descent of tranquillity, being surrounded by the angels, Allah's mention of the group among the highest company, His pride with them before the angels, and His forgiveness of their sins, as mentioned in authentic hadiths such as: «No group sits remembering [or mentioning] Allah except that the angels surround them, mercy covers them, tranquillity descends upon

them, and Allah mentions them among those with Him.» (Muslim)

Sahl ibn al-Handhaliyah (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «No people meet for remembrance and then separate but that they are told: Arise forgiven.» (aṭ-Ṭabarâni and Aḥmad; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

Ibn al-Ḥajar said: What is meant by the remembrance of Allah and intended from it is perseverance in doing the deeds that He made obligatory and that He encouraged, such as recitation of the Qur'an, reading Hadith and group study.¹²

Another evidence that gatherings of remembrance increase faith is a hadith related from Handhalah al-Usaydi (رضي الله عنه), who said: «Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) met me and asked: How are you, Handhalah?

I replied: Handhalah has become a hypocrite.

He exclaimed: *Subḥân Allâh!* (Glory be to Allah!) What are you saying?

I explained: When we are with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), he reminds us of hellfire and paradise as if we were eyewitnesses; after we leave him, though, our wives, children and occupations overcome us, so we forget much.

Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) said: By Allah, the same happens to me.

Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) and I went to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). I said: Handhalah has become a hypocrite, O Messenger of Allah.

¹² Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalâni, *Fath al-Bâri Sharḥ Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Bukhârî*. (Riyadh: Darussalam). Incessant group repetition of particular names of Allah (ﷻ) or other formulas, which has been named 'dhikr' by the Sufis and their followers among the common people and supposedly serves to 'empty the heart of all else', was not known to be a practice of the Prophet (ﷺ) or his Companions. (Editor)

He asked: And how is that?

I replied: When we are with you, you remind us of hellfire and paradise as though we are eyewitnesses. After we leave you, though, our wives, children and occupations overcome us, so we forget much.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: By Him in whose Hand is my soul, if you should always be as you are with me and in constant remembrance, the angels would shake your hands in your homes and streets. But Handhala, there is a time for this and a time for that. [He repeated it three times].» (Muslim)

The Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) were very keen to sit together and remember Allah (ﷻ). They would refer to this as belief, as Mu'âdh (رضي الله عنه) said to a man: "Let us sit and believe for a while."¹³

5. Doing many righteous deeds and filling one's time with them

This is an important matter, as its effect on strengthening faith makes it one of the greatest cures. A great example is found in Abu Bakr as-Şiddeeq (رضي الله عنه).

«One day, the Messenger (ﷺ) asked his Companions: Who among you began his morning today by fasting?

Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) replied: I did.

He inquired: Who among you accompanied a funeral procession today?

Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) said: I did.

¹³ An authentic narration quoted by al-Albâni, *Arba' Masâ'il fil-Eemân*, 72.

He queried: Who among you fed a poor person today?

Abu Bakr (ﷺ) answered: I did.

He asked: Who among you visited a sick person today?

Abu Bakr (ﷺ) replied: I did.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: These [virtues] are not combined in a person but that he will enter paradise.» (Muslim)

This narration shows that aṣ-Ṣiddeeq (ﷺ) was eager to take advantage of opportunities and practice different kinds of worship. Since the question came unexpectedly from the Prophet (ﷺ), it showed that Abu Bakr's days were filled with good deeds. The members of the three best generations after the Prophet (ﷺ) attained a high degree in the additional performance of righteous deeds, as illustrated by what was reported about some of them. For instance, Imam 'Abdur-Raḥmân ibn Maḥdi said that if Ḥammâd ibn Salâmah was told that he was going to die tomorrow, he would not be able to increase his deeds at all.¹⁴

A Muslim should observe certain etiquette pertaining to righteous deeds:

a) Hastening to perform them. Allah, the Exalted, has said:

﴿وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ﴾

(سورة آل عمران: ١٣٣)

﴿١٣٣﴾ ...

﴿And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden [meaning paradise] as wide as the heavens and earth...﴾

(Qur'an 3: 133)

¹⁴ ad-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam an-Nubalâ*'.

﴿سَابِقُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾

(سورة الحديد: ٢١)



«Race toward forgiveness from your Lord and a garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth...»

(*Qur'an* 57: 21)

The meaning behind these verses motivated the Prophet's Companions to compete with each other in terms of doing good deeds. Anas ibn Mâlik (رضي الله عنه) related this hadith about the battle of Badr, when the polytheists had come close to victory: «The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Arise to paradise, which is as wide as the heavens and earth!

‘Umayr ibn al-Humam al-Anṣârî asked: O Messenger of Allah, paradise as wide as the heavens and earth?

He replied: Yes.

‘Umayr exclaimed: Great!

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) asked: What made you say: Great?

He answered: By Allah, it was only the hope that I could be among its inhabitants.

He said: Indeed, you are among its inhabitants.

‘Umayr took out some dates from his container and began to eat them, then said: If I live to eat these dates of mine, it will indeed be a long life. He threw aside his dates and fought until he was martyred.» (Muslim)

Previously, Prophet Moses (عليه السلام) had hurried to the meeting with his Lord and said:

(سورة طه: ٨٤)

﴿... وَعَجِلْتُ إِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضَى﴾

﴿...I hastened to You, my Lord, that You be pleased.﴾

(Qur'an 20: 84)

Allah (ﷻ) has also praised Zachariah (ﷺ) and his family, saying:

﴿... إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا

(سورة الأنبياء: ٩٠)

وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ﴾

﴿...Indeed, they used to hasten to good deeds and supplicate Us in hope and fear, and were to Us humbly submissive.﴾

(Qur'an 21: 90)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Deliberation in all things is good unless it is in doing a deed for the hereafter.» (Abu Dâwood; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

b) Continuing to perform them

The Messenger (ﷺ) quoted the following from his Lord in a sacred hadith: «My servant does not cease drawing near to Me through additional worship until I love him.» (Bukhari)

The words 'does not cease' show continuation.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Follow up between Hajj and 'umrah.» (Muslim)

This also means continuation. This is an important principle regarding the strengthening of faith and caring for the soul, and preventing it from inactivity and stagnation. Continual worship, even if it is a little, is preferable to a great amount that is discontinued after a couple of times. Consistent performance of good deeds strengthens one's faith.

When the Prophet (ﷺ) was asked which deeds are most loved by Allah, he said: «The most regular of them, even if they are few.» (Bukhari)

«When he practiced an act of worship, he made it permanent.» (Muslim)

c) Expending effort

Treatment for hard-heartedness cannot be a temporary one, where faith improves for a while and then returns to weakness. Instead, there must be a constant renewal of faith, and this is not possible unless effort is spent in worship.

Allah (ﷻ) has mentioned in His book the efforts of those who are close to Him and their conditions:

﴿إِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهَا خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَسَبَّحُوا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ۝١٥ نَتَجَافَىٰ جُنُوبَهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ۝١٦﴾
(سورة السَّجْدَةِ: ١٥-١٦)

«Only those believe in Our verses who, when they are reminded by them, fall down in prostration and exalt [Allah] with praise of their Lord, and they are not arrogant. They arise from [their] beds; they supplicate their Lord in fear and aspiration, and from what We have provided them, they spend.» (Qur'an 32: 15-16)

﴿كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ ۝١٧ وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ ۝١٨ وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ ۝١٩﴾
(سورة الذَّارِيَاتِ: ١٧-١٩)

«They used to sleep but little of the night, and in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness, and from their properties was

[given] the right of the [needy] petitioner and the deprived.﴾
(Qur'an 51: 17-19)

Observing the state of our righteous predecessors and how they attained the attributes of worshippers brings about wonder and motivates one to follow their footsteps. They used to complete one-seventh of the Qur'an daily and stay up during the nights before campaigns and battles, praising Allah (ﷻ) and praying. Even when imprisoned, they would align their feet, their tears would fall, and they would contemplate the creation of the heavens and earth.

One of them would pretend to sleep — as a woman does with her child — and when he was sure his wife was asleep, he would slip out of her bed for night prayers. They would divide the night between their families and themselves, and spend their days fasting, learning, teaching, accompanying funerals, visiting the sick, and helping people. Some of them would go years without missing a prayer in congregation with the imam. Their hearts were attached to the mosques; they would await one prayer after another. One of them looked after his brother's family for years after his brother's death, spending to maintain them; this increased his faith.

d) Keeping the soul from becoming weary

Consistency in worship and effort therein does not mean exposing oneself to monotony and boredom; it only means not discontinuing worship. Muslims can strike a balance between the two extremes by taking upon themselves only those acts of worship that they can sustain. They aim to pursue them and work hard when they find themselves enthusiastic, while remaining moderate during intermissions. A collection of hadiths points to

these concepts, among them: «Indeed, the religion is ease, and anyone who overdoes the religion will be defeated by it, so aim for and pursue a middle course...» (Bukhari)

In another narration: «...and you will reach the objective.» (Bukhari)

In a chapter on what is disliked regarding exaggeration in worship, Bukhari (may Allah have mercy upon him) reported that Anas (رضي الله عنه) said: «The Prophet (ﷺ) once entered the mosque and found a rope tied between two pillars. He asked: What is this rope? They replied: It is a rope for Zaynab — when she becomes tired, she grasps it for support. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: No, untie it. Let people pray when they are energetic, but when they become tired, they should sit down.» (Bukhari)

When the Prophet (ﷺ) found out that ‘Abdullâh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Âṣ (رضي الله عنه) prayed the whole night and fasted consecutively for many days, he forbade him from that and clarified the reason, saying: «For if you do that, your eyes will become sunken and your soul fatigued.» (Bukhari, Muslim, an-Nasâ’i and Aḥmad)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) also said: «Take upon yourselves whatever deeds you can sustain, for Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, does not become uninterested although you do. Indeed, the deeds most loved by Allah are the most regular, even if few.» (Bukhari, an-Nasâ’i, Aḥmad and Abu Dâwood)

e) Making up for what was missed

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «If one sleeps without reciting his portion of the Qur’an at night, or part of it, but then recites it between the dawn prayer and the noon prayer — it will be recorded for him as though he had recited it during the night.» (Muslim)

‘Ā’ishah (ﷺ) said: «When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) prayed a prayer, he would be regular about it; and when he missed getting up for prayer at night, having been overcome by sleep or pain, he would pray twelve *raka’ât* (units of formal prayer) during the day.» (Aḥmad and Muslim)

In another narration: «When he slept at night or was ill, he prayed twelve *raka’ât* during the day.» (Muslim)

When Umm Salamah (ﷺ) saw him praying two *raka’ât* after the late afternoon prayer, she asked him about it, and he (ﷺ) replied: «O daughter of Abu Umayyah, you asked about two *raka’ât* after the late afternoon prayer. Some people from ‘Abdul-Qays came and kept me occupied so that I missed the two *raka’ât* after the noon prayer; they are those two.» (Bukhari)

When he did not pray four *raka’ât* before the noon prayer, he prayed them after it. (at-Tirmidhi; al-Albâni graded it as ‘reliable but odd’)

These hadiths are evidence for making up sunnah prayers.

Ibn al-Qayyim has mentioned three meanings concerning the Prophet’s fasting in Sha‘bân more than other months. Two of them are:

- (a) he used to fast three days of every month; perhaps during some months he was prevented from fasting, so he combined them and fasted them all in Sha‘bân instead,
- (b) in order to do it before the obligatory fast of Ramadan. (Muslim and Abu Dâwood)

Also, during the last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to stay in the mosque for the purpose of worship. One year, he was unable to do so due to travelling, so he did it the following year for twenty days. (Bukhari)

f) Hoping for acceptance while fearing the opposite

After doing their best in acts of obedience, believers should still fear that their deeds might not be accepted due to some fault in performance, intent or attitude known only to Allah (ﷻ).

«‘Â’ishah (رضي الله عنها) reported: I asked the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) about this verse:

(سورة المؤمنون: ٦٠) ﴿وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجَلَةٌ...﴾

«And they who give what they give while their hearts are fearful...»
(*Qur'an* 23: 60)

Are they the ones who drink intoxicants and steal?

He replied: No, O daughter of aş-Şiddeeq, they are those who fast and pray and give charity while fearing that it will not be accepted from them. Those are the ones who race to good deeds.»
(at-Tirmidhi; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

Abu ad-Dardâ' (رضي الله عنه) was quoted as saying: “To be certain that Allah had accepted from me a single prayer would be more pleasing to me than the world and whatever is in it, for He says:

(سورة المائدة: ٢٧) ﴿... إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

«...Allah only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him].»
(*Qur'an* 5: 27)”¹⁵

Among the attributes of believers is that they consider themselves unworthy before Allah (ﷻ).

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «If a man were to be dragged on his face from the day he was born to the day he died in old age, seeking the

¹⁵ Ibn Katheer, *Tafseer Ibn Katheer*.

pleasure of Allah (ﷻ), he would see it as insignificant on the Day of Resurrection.» (Aḥmad; al-Albâni graded it as reliable)

Those who know Allah (ﷻ) as well as themselves will be certain that whatever they have to offer is not sufficient, even if they could bring together all the deeds of human beings and jinn. They know that Allah (ﷻ) accepts them because of His generosity and favour and rewards them out of His generosity and favour.

6. Diversifying types of worship

It is from Allah's mercy and His wisdom that He has varied for us the kinds of worship we can do. Some are done with the body, such as prayer; some through wealth, like giving charity; some with both, like Hajj; and some by the tongue, such as praise and supplication.

Even within one type are both obligations and desirable sunnahs. For example, within the different types of prayers, there are prayers of different ranks: such as the regular sunnah prayers of twelve units in a day and some of lower rank, such as the four sunnah before the late afternoon prayer and the optional mid- to late morning prayer. There are some of higher rank, such as the optional late night prayers, which take different forms as well; within them there is prayer of two or four raka'ât at a time, followed by a single raka'ah of supererogatory prayer and sometimes five, seven or nine units, with only one sitting in the prayer, and so on.

The one who keeps track of the acts of worship will find great diversity in their numbers, times, forms, attributes and rulings. Perhaps the wisdom behind this is to prevent the soul from becoming bored and to enable it to find something new. In

addition, not everyone is equal in terms of concentration and ability. Some may enjoy the performance of certain kinds of worship more than others. Perfect is He who has assigned the doors to paradise according to the types of worship, as mentioned in the hadith of Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) where the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Whoever spends repeatedly in the cause of Allah will be called from the doors to paradise: O servant of Allah, this is good! Those of the people of prayer will be called from the door of prayer; those of the people of jihad will be called from the door of jihad; those of the people of fasting will be called from the door named ar-Rayyân, and those of the people of charity will be called from the door of charity.» (Bukhari)

This hadith refers to those people who continuously perform additional, voluntary worship of each kind specified in the hadith. Obligatory duties, of course, must be done by everyone.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The parent is the central door to paradise.» (A sound hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

Kindness to parents, which is another form of worship, can increase faith. It is also simple to implement continuously.

One may benefit from this diversity in the treatment of weak faith by increasing those forms of worship to which the soul is inclined, while regularly performing the obligations ordained by Allah (ﷻ). When inspecting texts about worship, Muslims will find that there are unique things that can be done to increase faith. These have subtle meanings and effects on the soul, and through them, people can single out their weaknesses and focus on improving their ability to strengthen their faith. Here are two examples:

a) Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «There are

three whom Allah loves and three whom Allah hates. Among those whom Allah loves is a man who confronts the enemy in a company and plants himself firmly, fighting against them until he is killed or his companions are granted victory. Another is the one who is travelling with people far into the night until they long to touch ground [to rest]; when they halt, he foregoes [sleep] and prays and then awakens them for departure. And [the third is] a man who has a neighbour who annoys him, and he patiently bears his annoyance until they are separated by death or departure.» (Aḥmad; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

b) A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) complaining of harshness in his heart. He said to him: «Would you like your heart to be softened and to attain your need? Show mercy to the orphan, stroke his head and feed him from your food. Your heart will be softened, and you will get what you need.» (Recorded by Aḥmad with a sound chain of narrators)

This is a direct attestation concerning the treatment of weak faith.

7. Fear of a bad end,

which motivates Muslims to obediently do acts of worship and renews faith in their hearts. A bad end [while dying] has many causes. Among them is a weak level of faith, leading to preoccupation with disobedient ways. The Prophet (ﷺ) illustrated such deaths in the following hadith: «Whoever kills himself with an iron [knife or sword] will have it in his hand, thrusting it into himself in hellfire forever. Whoever drinks poison and kills himself will sip it in hellfire eternally. Whoever throws himself from a mountain and kills himself will be falling [continuously] in hellfire forever.» (Muslim)

Such occurrences did take place during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). «There was a man who fought most bravely on behalf of the Muslims in a battle. The Prophet (ﷺ) looked at him and said: If anyone would like to see a man from the people of the fire, let him look at this (brave man). One of the Muslims followed him, and he was fighting fiercely against the pagans until he was wounded. Then he hastened to end his life by placing his sword between his breasts and throwing his weight onto it until it came out between his shoulders.» (Bukhari)

The scholars have recorded a number of incidents where bad endings affected people. Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned in his book *ad-Dâ' wad-Dawâ' (The Disease and the Medication)*:

Someone was told at the time of death to say *Lâ ilâha illâ Allâh* (there is no God worthy of worship besides Allah), but he replied: "I cannot." Another was told to say *Lâ ilâha illâ Allâh*, but he began to sing deliriously. A businessman whose commerce had diverted him from the remembrance of Allah (ﷻ) was told, when death approached him, to say *Lâ ilâha illâ Allâh*, but he started saying: "This piece is good; this is up to your standards; this can be bought cheaply," until he died.

It is also related:

One of the soldiers of the king, an-Nâṣir, was on the verge of death, so his son told him to say *Lâ ilâha illâ Allâh*, but he said: "An-Nâṣir is my lord." The son repeated it again to him, but his father kept on saying: "An-Nâṣir is my lord, an-Nâṣir is my lord," then he died.

Someone else was told to say *Lâ ilâha illâ Allâh*, but he started saying: "Fix such-and-such in that house, and do such-and-such in that garden." A usurer was told at death to say *Lâ ilâha illâ Allâh*,

but he said: “Ten for eleven,” repeating it until he died. Some people also turn blackish or turn their faces away from the direction of prayer.¹⁶

Ibn al-Jawzi said: “Indeed, I heard someone whom I thought had much goodness saying on the eve of his death: ‘It is my Lord who was unjust to me.’ Exalted is Allah above what he said — on his deathbed, he accused Allah of injustice!”

Then Ibn al-Jawzi said: “I have not ceased to be disturbed and preoccupied with making preparations to meet that day.”¹⁷

Subhân Allâh! How many lessons of this sort have people witnessed? And what is hidden from them of the dying person’s condition is even greater.¹⁸

8. Frequent remembrance of death

The Messenger (ﷺ) has said: «Remember often the destroyer of pleasures: death.» (at-Tirmidhi; al-Albâni graded it as ‘reliable but odd’)

Remembering death inhibits disobedience and softens the hard heart. For everyone who remembers it during life’s restrictions, things become easier. For everyone who remembers it during ease, things become restrictive. One of the greatest reminders of death is visiting graves; therefore, the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered visiting the graveyards and said: «I had prohibited you from visiting graves; however, visit them [now], for it makes the heart

¹⁶ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Ad-Dâ’ wad-Dawâ’* (Beirut: Dar at-Tawzee wan-Nashr ul-Islamia).

¹⁷ Abul-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzi, *Sayd al-Khâtir* (Al-Maktabat-ul-Asriya, 2004).

¹⁸ al-Jawziyah, *ad-Dâ’ wad-Dawâ’*.

tender, enables the eye to shed tears, and reminds one of the hereafter. Do not say anything evil.» (Recorded by Aḥmad with an acceptable grade)

It is even permissible for Muslims to visit the cemeteries of non-Muslims for the purpose of being admonished and warned. The proof of that is in the authentic narration in which the Prophet (ﷺ) visited his mother's grave; he wept and caused those around him to weep as well. Then he said: «I asked the permission of my Lord to seek forgiveness for her, but He did not give it to me. And I asked His permission to visit her grave, and He permitted me. So visit the graves, for it reminds one of death.» (Muslim)

Visiting graves is among the greatest means of softening the heart; it benefits the visitor with the remembrance of death and benefits the dead through the supplication of the living for them. Among the supplications from the Sunnah is that of the Prophet (ﷺ): «Peace be upon you, people of the abode from the believers and Muslims, and may Allah have mercy upon those who have gone before and those who went later. And we will be joining you, Allah willing.» (Muslim)

Those who decide to visit should adopt proper manners and ensure that their presence is heartfelt; the intention should be to seek Allah's acceptance. They should also seek to purify the corruption in their hearts by deriving a lesson from those who are now under the ground, severed from family and friends.

Let the visitors contemplate the state of those who have left their brothers, sisters and associates, who had once entertained hopes and collected wealth — how their hopes ended and their wealth was of no avail; how the ground erased the beauty of their faces; how they disintegrated in the graves; and how their spouses

are now widowed and their children orphans. Let them remember the peril of being deceived by material means, good health, youth and fondness for diversions and amusements. Let the visitors remember that they will certainly become like the ones whom they loved and who are now deceased. Let them think about the state of a dead person: how his legs are destroyed, his eyes melt and ooze, the worms eat his tongue and the dust consumes his teeth.¹⁹

*O you who listens to the caller to misery
While having been called by two announcers of death:
grey hair and old-age,
If you should not hear the reminder
Then for what are two attentive ones in your head:
the ears and the eyes?
The deaf and blind is not but a man
Unguided by two guides: vision and narration.
Neither time will remain nor the world
Nor the highest heavenly bodies nor the shining
of the sun and moon.
The two residents: desert and city dwellers,
Will surely travel from the world, even if unwilling to leave it.²⁰*

Those who remember death often will be favoured with three things: quick repentance, a satisfied heart and energetic worship. Those who forget death will be penalised with three things: procrastination of repentance, discontentment with what is sufficient, and laziness in worship.

¹⁹ Abu 'Abdullâh al-Qurtubi, *at-Tadhkirah* (Egypt: Dâr al-Manârah).

²⁰ Verses [in Arabic] by 'Abdullâh ibn Muhammad al-Andulusi ash-Shantreeni in *Ibn Katheer, Tafseer Ibn Katheer*.

The soul is also affected by observing those who are dying. When one looks at dying persons, witnessing their agonies and struggles and reflecting upon their form after death, he or she will find that which deprives the soul of pleasures, prevents the eye from sleeping and the body from resting, motivates good work and increases effort.

Al-Hasan al-Baṣri (may Allah have mercy on him) once visited a sick man and found him in the throes of death. After observing his distress and the severity of his affliction, he returned to his family with changed colour. They said to him: “Eat, may Allah have mercy upon you.” He said: “O people, take your food and drink. By Allah, I have seen a death such as I will continue to work [in preparation] for, until I encounter it.”²¹

To complete one’s perception of death is performance of the funeral prayer, carrying the body, taking it to the graveyard, burying the deceased, and covering him or her with earth, which brings to mind the hereafter. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Visit the sick and accompany funerals; it will remind you of the hereafter.» (Recorded by Aḥmad with a strong chain of narration)

In addition, there is a great reward for accompanying a funeral procession. The Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned: «Whoever is present at a funeral from its house [and in another narration: Whoever follows the funeral of a Muslim out of faith and seeking Allah’s reward] until he prays the funeral prayer will have one measure, and whoever is present until burial will have two measures of reward. Someone asked: O Messenger of Allah, what are the two measures? He (ﷺ) replied: As much as two great mountains. [And

²¹ al-Qurtubi, *at-Tadhkirah*.

in another narration: Each measure is like Mount Uhud.]» (Bukhari and Muslim)²²

When the early scholars gave advice to people who had committed sins, they used to remind them of death. During the assembly of one of these scholars, a man mentioned another in a bad way. The scholar said to the man who was backbiting: “Remember the cotton they will place over your eyes!” referring to the time of shrouding after death.

9. Remembering the stations of the hereafter

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

When one’s thought is sound, it imposes vision upon him and it is light within the heart. With it, he will perceive Allah’s promise and threat, paradise and hellfire, and what Allah (ﷻ) has prepared therein for His dear ones and for His enemies. He will visualise the people when they have been brought out of their graves, racing toward the call of truth while the angels of the heavens have descended and surrounded them and Allah (ﷻ) has come and established His place for the final judgement. The earth will shine with His light.

The book of deeds will be placed, and the prophets and witnesses will be brought. The scale will be erected, and the records will be spread. Opponents will be brought together, and every creditor will cling to his debtor. The pool will appear with its cups nearby; many will be thirsty, but few will come to it. The bridge will be placed [over hell] to be crossed, and the people will press towards it. Lights will be apportioned for

²² The wording is from several different narrations. See Muhammad Nâsiruddin al-Albâni, *Aḥkâm al-Janâ’iz*, 4th ed. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islâmi).

crossing through its darkness while the fire crushes in on itself below; and those falling into it are many, many times those who escape it.

Thus, an eye is opened in his heart, by which he sees all that, and his heart becomes a witness to the hereafter, showing it to him with its eternity and showing him the world with its quick extinction.²³

Within the magnificent Qur'an, scenes from the last day are mentioned frequently, such as in soorahs *Qâf*, *al-Wâqi'ah*, *al-Qiyâmah*, *al-Mursalât*, *an-Naba'*, *al-Mu'afifeen* and *at-Takweer*. The same is true for volumes of Hadith, under chapters with names like 'Resurrection', 'Sensitising the heart', 'Paradise', 'Hellfire', and the like. Another important source is books written by scholars for that purpose, such as *Prompter of Souls* by Ibn al-Qayyim, *The Ultimate in Tortures and Massacres* by Ibn Katheer, *The Reminder about Conditions of the Dead and Matters of the Hereafter* by al-Qurtubi, *The Great Resurrection, Paradise and Hellfire* by 'Umar al-Ashqâr, and others. The intention is to increase faith through knowledge of aspects of the hereafter: the resurrection, the gathering, the intercession, the accounting, the reward and punishment, the retribution, the scale, the pool, the bridge, and the final home — paradise or hell.

10. Interaction with the signs of the universe

«It is narrated that when the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saw a cloud or wind, it showed on his face. 'Â'ishah (رضي الله عنها) asked: O Messenger of Allah, I notice that when people see a cloud, they rejoice expecting rain; but when you see it, I recognise discomfort

²³ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Madârij as-Sâlikeen* (California: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 2004).

in your face. He replied: O ‘Â’ishah, how can I be sure that it does not contain a punishment? A people were punished by the wind, and though they saw the punishment [coming], they said:

﴿... هَذَا عَارِضٌ مُّطَرٌنَا ...﴾ (سورة الأحقاف: ٢٤)

﴿...This is a cloud bringing us rain...!﴾ (Qur'an 46: 24)» (Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) would jump up in alarm when he saw an eclipse.

Abu Moosâ (رضي الله عنه) related: «The sun eclipsed, and the Prophet (ﷺ) got up alarmed, fearing that it was the hour [of resurrection].» (Bukhari)

During a solar or lunar eclipse, He ordered Muslims to seek refuge in prayer, announcing that they were two signs from Allah (ﷻ) with which He warns His servants. Undoubtedly, through being affected by these phenomena and feeling terrified by them, faith is renewed in the heart, as it reminds one of Allah's punishment, His assault, His grandeur, His ability, His power and His vengeance. ‘Â’ishah (رضي الله عنها) related: «The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) took my hand and then pointed to the moon and said: O ‘Â’ishah, seek refuge in Allah from its evil, for indeed, it is darkness when it becomes dark.» (Recorded by Ahmad with a sound chain of narrators)

Other examples include being affected when passing by places where the earth has caved in and torment has occurred, or passing the graves of oppressors.

Ibn ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to his Companions when they arrived at al-Ḥijr: «Do not enter upon those tortured ones unless you are weeping. If you are not weeping, do not enter upon them lest you are struck by that which struck them.» (Bukhari)

In spite of this, people today go there for tourism and photography. Imagine how delicate their position is in the sight of Allah (ﷻ)!

11. Remembrance of Allah (ﷻ)

This is one of the most important means of treating weak faith because it polishes the heart, cures it and heals it when it is ailing. It is the essence of righteous deeds and has been ordained by Allah (ﷻ), who says:

(سورة الأحراب: ٤١) ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا﴾

«O you who have believed, remember Allah with much remembrance» (Qur'an 33: 41).

He has promised success for those who do it frequently:

(سورة الأنفال: ٤٥) ﴿... وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

«...and remember Allah much that you may be successful.» (Qur'an 8: 45)

The remembrance of Allah (ﷻ) is greater than all else, as He said:

(سورة العنكبوت: ٤٥) ﴿... وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ...﴾

«...and the remembrance of Allah is greater...» (Qur'an 29: 45)

It was also advised by the Prophet (ﷺ) for the one who was overwhelmed by the commandments of Islamic law. He said: «Let your tongue remain moist through the mention of Allah.» (at-Tirmidhi; al-Albâni graded it as sound)²⁴

²⁴ The hadith begins: «A man said: O Messenger of Allah, the ordinances of Islam have become many for me, and I am now old. Tell me something to which I may attach myself...»

It is a means of pleasing the Most Merciful, driving away Satan, eliminating anxiety and distress, obtaining provision, opening doors to knowledge, planting the garden of paradise, and ridding the tongue of its evils. It is also a comfort for the poor who feel saddened by having nothing to give in charity. Allah (ﷻ) has substituted for them the mention of Him, in contrast to the financial means of worship He may have blessed others with.

Failure to mention or remember Allah (ﷻ) is a cause of harshness of the heart. It has been said:

*Forgetting Allah is death to the hearts,
Their bodies, before the graves, are their graves
Their souls incompatible with their forms,
For them, until resurrection, there is no revival.*

Thus, it is necessary for those who want to treat their weakness of faith to frequently remember Allah (ﷻ), who said:

﴿... وَأَذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيتَ ...﴾ (سورة الكهف: ٢٤)

﴿...And remember your Lord when you forget...﴾ (Qur'an 18: 24)

Allah (ﷻ) also said, showing its effect on the heart:

﴿... أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ﴾ (سورة الزعد: ٢٨)

﴿...Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured.﴾ (Qur'an 13: 28)

Ibn al-Qayyim stated on the subject: "Within the heart is a hardness that is only melted by the remembrance of Allah (ﷻ), so the servant should treat the harshness of his heart by remembering Allah."

Someone remarked to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī: "I complain to you of my hard heart." He said: "Soften it with remembrance."

This is because the more heedless the heart, the harder it becomes; when it remembers Allah (ﷻ), the hardness is melted just as lead melts in fire. Remembrance is healing for the heart and a remedy, while heedlessness is its disease and malady. Makhul said, “Remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, is a cure, while the remembrance of people is an illness.”²⁵

Through remembrance, a servant can bring down the devil just as the devil brings down the heedless and forgetful. An early scholar said:

When a heart is full of Allah’s remembrance, if the devil comes near, it will throw him down. Then the other devils will gather around him and exclaim: “What’s this?” They will be told: “He has been afflicted by a human!”²⁶

Most of the people who are afflicted by devils are those who are heedless and do not protect themselves with recitations and supplications. For this reason, the devils can easily get involved with them.

Some of those who complain of weak faith find difficulty in certain methods of treatment, such as night prayers and additional worship. For these people, it would be suitable to begin with the following remedies, taking care to do them regularly. Some of these include memorising and continually repeating various recitations, such as these words of praise that were often spoken by the Prophet (ﷺ) and have been narrated by Bukhari and others: «*Lâ ilâha illâ Allâhu waḥdahu lâ shareeka lah, lahul-mulku wa lahul-ḥamdu wa huwa ‘alâ kulli shay’in qadeer.* (There is no god

²⁵ al-Jawziyah, *Al-Wâbil as-Sayyib wa Râfi‘ al-Kalim at-Ṭayyib*.

²⁶ al-Jawziyah, *Madârij as-Sâlikeen*.

but Allah alone, having no partner. To Him belongs dominion, and to Him is due (all) praise. He is over all things competent.)»

«*Subhân Allâhi wa bihamdihi. Subhân Allâhil-‘adheem.* (Exalted is Allah, and [I affirm it] by praise of Him. Exalted is Allah, the Most Great.)»

«*Lâ hawla wa lâ quwwata illâ billâh.* (There is no power and no strength except in Allah.)»

— and so on.

They might also memorise the supplications from the Sunnah which are related to a time or place, such as those for the morning and the evening; when going to sleep and waking up; after having dreams; when eating; when relieving oneself; while travelling; at the time of rain; when entering the mosque; when seeking the decision of Allah (ﷻ); at the time of a disaster; when visiting the graves; during a strong wind; when seeing a new moon; when mounting a riding animal; when greeting someone; after sneezing; when hearing the crowing of a rooster, the braying of a donkey or the barking of a dog; for expiation of sins at the end of a gathering; when seeing people afflicted by misfortune, and so on. Undoubtedly, those who carefully observe these will find them directly affecting and creating an impression on their heart.²⁷

12. Addressing Allah (ﷻ) privately and showing humility before Him

This revives faith in the heart, because the more humble and submissive the servants, the closer they become to Allah (ﷻ).

²⁷ Taqi ad-Deen Ibn Taymiyah, *Al-Kalim at-Tayyib* (condensed and edited by Shaykh al-Albâni).

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «The closest a servant can be to his Lord is while he is in prostration, so make much supplication then.» (Muslim)

The reason is that the state of prostration involves humility and subjection more than any other posture or position. When the servants of Allah press their foreheads — the highest part of them — to the ground, they show great humility and subservience to their Creator. Hence, they are the closest to their Lord in this posture. Ibn al-Qayyim expresses the beautiful words of the repentant, broken and humbled individual before his Lord:

How sweet to Allah are the words of the one in this condition who says: I ask You by Your strength and my weakness, and by Your self-sufficiency and my need for You.²⁸ My deceitful sinning forelock is before You; Your servants other than me are numerous [while You are my only Lord]. There is no refuge and no safety from You except in You. I ask You with the plea of a poor man and implore You in submission and humility; I supplicate to You with the supplication of a fearful blind man, that of the one who has bowed his neck [exposing his vulnerability] to You and thrust his nose into the ground for You [debasing himself], whose eyes have wept and whose heart has deferred to You.

As the servants offer such words, confiding in their Lord, faith increases in their hearts many times over.

Thus, confessing our insufficiency to Allah (ﷻ) strengthens our faith. Allah (ﷻ) has informed us of our need for Him, saying:

²⁸ Requesting by humbling oneself before Allah (ﷻ) is among the lawful means of approaching Him through righteous deeds.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾﴾

(سورة فاطر: ١٥)

«O humankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.» (Qur'an 35: 15)

13. Limiting the extent of long-term hope

This is very important for reviving faith.

Ibn al-Qayyim said: Among the greatest observations concerning it are these verses:

﴿أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾ ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾ مَا أَغْنَىٰ

(سورة الشعراء: ٢٠٥-٢٠٧)

عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَمْتَنِعُونَ ﴿٢٠٧﴾﴾

«Then have you considered if We gave them enjoyment for years and then there came to them that which they were promised? They would not be availed by the enjoyment with which they were provided.» (Qur'an 26: 205-207)

﴿... لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنْ نَّهَارٍ بَلِغْ ﴿٣٥﴾ ...﴾

(سورة الأحقاف: ٣٥)

«...as though they had not remained [in the world] except an hour of a day...» (Qur'an 46: 35)

That is all there is to the world, so let a person not extend his expectation, thinking: I shall live on and on.

One of the righteous predecessors spoke to a man about leading them in the noon prayer. The man said: If I lead you in the noon prayer, I will not do so for the late afternoon prayer. The other said: It is almost as if you expect to live until the late

afternoon prayer. We seek refuge in Allah (ﷻ) from long-term hope.

14. Reflecting upon the insignificance of this world, which removes attachment to it from the servant's heart

Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿... وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ﴾ (سورة الحديد: ٢٠)

﴿...And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion?﴾ (Qur'an 57: 20)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The food of a son of Adam presents a comparison to this world. See how it emerges from the son of Adam; even though he has embellished and seasoned it, he knows what it will become.» (Recorded by at-Ṭabarâni with a sound chain of narrators)

Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) also reported: «I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say: The world is cursed and what it contains is cursed, except for the mention of Allah and what is successive to it, or a scholar or a student.» (at-Tirmidhi; al-Albâni graded it as 'reliable but odd')

15. Honouring what Allah has made sacred

The Exalted has said:

﴿... وَمَنْ يُعْظَمْ شَعْبَرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ﴾ (سورة الحج: ٣٢)

﴿...And whoever honours the rites of Allah — it is indeed from the piety of hearts.﴾ (Qur'an 22: 32)

This refers to the rites of Allah (ﷻ) that pertain to certain people, places and times. It would include, for example, observing

the rights of the Prophet (ﷺ) and honouring the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, or that of the month of Ramadan.

﴿وَمَنْ يُعْظَمْ حُرْمَتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ...﴾ (سورة الحج: ٣٠)

«...and whoever honours the sacred ordinances of Allah — it is best for him in the sight of his Lord...» (Qur'an 22: 30)

This means also that one should not consider the lesser sins to be insignificant.

‘Abdullâh ibn Mas‘ood (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Beware of trivial sins, for indeed they collect on a man until they destroy him, like people in an open land who prepared a meal. One man went and brought a stick and another brought a stick... until they collected a great mass and then kindled a fire and cooked whatever was thrown into it.» (Recorded by Ahmad with a sound chain of narrators)

*Give up sins, both small and great, O righteous one
And do as one who walks a ground of thorns,
cautious of what he sees
Never ignore a small sin, for indeed mountains
are comprised of pebbles.*

Ibn al-Jawzi said in *Sayd al-Khâtir*: Many people are careless about matters they think are unimportant, while they actually infringe upon the fundamental principles: such matters as looking at what is prohibited or a student's borrowing a portion [of the Qur'an] and failing to return it.

An early scholar said: "I indulged in a bite of food and partook of it, so today I am forty years behind." And this was said out of modesty, may Allah have mercy upon him.

16. Loyalty to the believers and disassociation from disbelievers

When a heart is attached to the enemies of Allah (ﷻ), it becomes extremely weak, and the creed declines therein. On the other hand, when loyalty is only for Allah (ﷻ), and one benefits and supports His believing servants, while opposing and detesting His enemies, it brings faith to life.

17. Modesty

This has an effective role in increasing faith and polishing the heart, ridding it of the rust of conceit. Modesty in one's speech, actions and appearance indicates the level of humility of the heart towards Allah (ﷻ).

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Being humble in dress is part of the faith.» (Abu Dâwood; al-Albâni graded it as sound)

He also said: «Whoever gives up [elegant] clothing out of humility to Allah while he is able to do otherwise, Allah will invite him on the Day of Resurrection before all of creation to choose from which ornaments of faith he would like to wear.» (A reliable hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

Among those modest in appearance was 'Abdur-Raḥmân ibn 'Awf, who could not be distinguished from his slaves.

18. Deeds of the heart

Examples of these are: loving Allah (ﷻ), fearing Him, putting one's hope in Him, relying upon Him, accepting His decree, being grateful to Him, being honest with Him, believing in Him, trusting in Him, repenting to Him, and so on.

There are ‘stations’ or attributes that every servant should attain to complete the treatment, such as adherence to the straight path, continual return to Allah (ﷻ), retrospection and self-reminding, holding fast to the Qur’an and Sunnah, submissiveness to Allah, indifference to the world, piety, awareness, and so on — all of which Ibn al-Qayyim has discussed fully in his book *Madârij as-Sâlikeen*.

19. Taking account of the self

Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿يَتَأْتِيهَا الذِّكْرُ ءَامِنُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَالْتَنظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ ...﴾

(سورة الحشر : ١٨)

﴿O you who have believed, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow...﴾ (Qur’an 59: 18)

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) advised: “Take account of yourselves before you are called to account.”

Al-Ḥasan observed: “You will not meet a [true] believer who does not call himself to account.”

Maymun ibn Maḥrân also remarked: “A pious person is stricter in taking account of himself than a greedy partner.”

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

The soul’s destruction is due to neglect in taking account of it, from giving in to it, and from following its inclinations. So a Muslim must take time to be alone and critically examine himself, call his soul to account, look into its condition, and consider what provision he has sent ahead for the Appointed Day.

20. Finally, supplication to Allah (ﷻ) is among the most powerful means that a servant can use to improve the strength of faith

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Faith becomes worn out inside one of you like a garment wears out, so ask Allah to renew the faith in your hearts.» (A reliable hadith recorded by al-Ḥâkim)

O Allah, we ask You by Your best names and exalted attributes to renew the faith in our hearts. O Allah, make us love faith and adorn it in our hearts, and make us hate disbelief, rebellion and disobedience. O Allah, make us of the rightly guided and of those with strong faith.

Exalted is the Lord of Might and Honour above what they describe, and peace be upon the messengers. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

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GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC TERMS*

<i>ahl as-Sunnah wal-jamâ'ah</i>	أهل السنة والجماعة	'people of the Sunnah and the community'
<i>Anṣâr</i>	أنصار	'helpers': the Muslim citizens of Madinah who gave refuge to the Prophet (ﷺ) and the other Muslim emigrants from Makkah
<i>dhikr Allâh</i>	ذكر الله	remembrance of Allah; specifically, remembering Allah through praising and supplicating to Him
<i>Eid ('eed)</i>	عيد	<i>lit.</i> festival; the two celebrations: one at the end of Ramadan and the other at the culmination of the Hajj
<i>Hadith (ḥadeeth)</i>	حديث	the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that with the Qur'an form the basis of Islamic law
<i>hadith (ḥadeeth)</i>	حديث	a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that was

* The Arabic words are transliterated according to the conventions of the Transliteration Chart found in this book. If a word has become part of the English language (i.e., is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book and appears first in this Glossary, with the transliterated form in brackets after it.

		remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers
<i>Hajj (ḥajj)</i>	حج	the major pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque, site of the Ka'bah at Makkah, to be undertaken by every able Muslim once in his/her lifetime
<i>jihad (jihād)</i>	جهاد	struggle or striving (in Allah's cause)
<i>jinn</i> (plural of <i>jinni</i>)	جن	non-human, rational beings created by Allah from fire, often referred to as 'demons' or 'devils'; They have free will like humans: some are Muslims, others disbelievers; some are obedient to Allah, others disobedient. Satan is a jinni. Some people try to 'foretell' the future by contacting a jinni. Some disobedient jinn mislead people into thinking that they can tell them what will happen in the future, near or far, or that the jinn can provide people with riches or some sort of power.
<i>lâ ilâha</i> <i>illâ Allâh</i>	لا إله إلا الله	there is none worthy of worship other than Allah
<i>Quraysh</i>	قریش	the dominant tribe in Makkah at the time of the Prophet's mission; their society was based on polytheism

<i>raka'ah</i> (pl. <i>raka'ât</i>)	ركعة	a unit of the formal prayer (ṣalât)
<i>Ramadan</i> (<i>Ramaḍân</i>)	رمضان	the ninth month in the Islamic calendar; the month of obligatory fasting; the month in which the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed
<i>soorah or soorat</i>	سورة	chapter of the Qur'an
<i>subhân Allâh</i>	سبحان الله	glory be to Allah
<i>Sunnah</i>	سنة	the practice and collected sayings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that together with the Qur'an forms the basis of Islamic law
<i>sunnah</i>	سنة	acts that are recommended but not mandatory
<i>Ummah</i>	أمة	community or nation: <i>usu.</i> used to refer to the entire global community of Muslims
<i>'umrah</i>	عمرة	a minor, non-obligatory pilgrimage to Makkah